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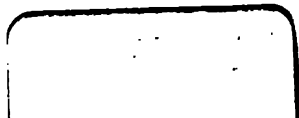
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L I V E I T D O W N .

VOL. III.



LIVE IT DOWN.

A Story of the Fight Lands.

BY

J. C. JEAFFRESON,

AUTHOR OF

“OLIVE BLAKE’S GOOD WORK,”

“A BOOK ABOUT DOCTORS,”

ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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LIVE IT DOWN.

CHAPTER I.

MR. ALEXANDER BARBER EXERCISES HIS MARITAL AUTHORITY.

THOUGH Alec Barber averred that he did not recognize it, he knew the undisguised handwriting of the anonymous note, immediately his eyes fell upon it.

Leaving the Gedgrave Horseshoes, an hour after Edgar Turrett's departure, the man spent the next three days driving about the 'light lands,' and keeping a sharp eye on business. At the inns and farm-houses, which he visited on his devious route, he drank more freely than usual of wine and spirits; and he betrayed, in sharp words and quick manner, that he was in no common state of excitement.

Indeed, Mr. Alexander Barber was disturbed in mind,—disturbed because he was foiled in part of his machinations against the young Squire, and yet more disturbed because the young Squire had received the warning from a woman whom he (Alec) had not deemed capable of such an act.

"He'd be a nice young gentleman," mused Alec, as he sat alone in his spidery gig, "if he had just a quarter of the wits with which Providence has blessed him! He'd exactly answer my purpose, if he was as big a fool as a young gentleman of fortune ought to be. It's cruel hard that a man should be born to money, and yet know how to take care of it! Hang me,—skin me purple,—if it isn't cruel hard! You see, Alec, if you could have led him into debt, say to the tune of £7,000 or £8,000, you'd have had him much more at your mercy. He'd in such case see no way out of his trouble, except through old Probity's money-bags; and to prevent the wrong wind being blown upon him in that quarter, he'd come to any terms with me. But now, there's no knowing how he may act. Honour is a plaguy strange customer to have dealings with; when it seems to be lying most quiet at your feet, it's often on the very point of blowing up in your face. You've got some delicate points to settle before you go into action, Master Alec!

"But you've got him in your grip, though he little thinks where your fingers are. The question is, when'll be the best time to squeeze him, so that as much juice may flow as possible. Be patient, Alec, and you'll choose the right time. Be patient. The Castle Hollow acres wont run away. Bide your time, old boy! Bide your time!"

And having taken this view of his relations towards the young Squire (a view which he took several times during the three days), Mr. Alexander Barber turned his thoughts to the writer of the anonymous letter, and thus communed with his particular friend Alec: "That's what comes of marrying a literary rope-dancer! But you'll be even with her, Alec, or you're a duller dog

than I take you for. She cherishes a romantic affection for the young Squire, does she? She'd like to pick him out of the fire, just as he picked her out of another sort of fire, would she? Here's a pretty game, for a woman to turn against her own husband! That's theatrical morality shaken up with literary morality! Ay, authors and actors are a bad lot! But I'll keep the convict's daughter in order. If she so much as raises a finger against my will, I'll plunder young Turrett to the last penny he has. And I'll reduce her own father to beggary, and then hang him by way of a moral exhibition. There are more moves in the game, Mrs. Alec, than you think for!"

When Alec Barber reached his 'little place' at the close of the third day, he was apparently in a most amiable temper. Greeting his wife in the parlour, where fire and supper welcomed his return, he kissed her, and declared that she had never looked better in all her days.

But Christina neither looked well, nor was well. For more than two months she had been contending with marsh-ague; and the pounds of coarse bark-powder which she had swallowed at the bidding of an Easthaven apothecary, instead of conquering the fever and weakness, had done more harm in one direction than it had done good in another. Enlightened physicians, like Dr. Magnum, were beginning to prescribe quinine to patients who could afford to pay for it; but the apothecary who attended Alec Barber's wife had not even heard of its existence.

"Any news since I've been away, Mrs. Alec?" inquired the husband, when he was at the supper-table.

"Not much. Jane Stock went into Easthaven, and

brought me back a letter from my uncle. But there were no letters for you."

"Indeed, and what does your uncle say? He is not at Sedgehassock now?"

"No, he has started on circuit again; but he offers me the use of his house at Sedgehassock. He thinks the change would do me good. And I think he's right."

"What, the ague still hangs about you, does it?"

"I shan't shake it off here, Alec."

"Well, Chrissy, it is an unhealthy place,—there's no doubt about it."

"You see, Alec, if I went to Sedgehassock for a month or six weeks, you could visit me there just as easily as here. I have no duties to keep me here the whole year round."

"That's put sensibly enough, Chrissy. We must see about it."

"Then I could arrange with Mr. Braddock about my novel," continued Christina, fortifying her petition with prudential consideration. "If he could sell it for me, the money would be very handy, Alec."

"Oh, you've finished it?"

"Yes, as well as I've been able, with this ague troubling me."

"That's all right. Come, you've been industrious."

"I don't think there's anything good in it, now that it's done; and yet, while I was at work about it, I felt certain it was very good. The sheets have had more tears than ink spilt over them, Alec."

"I'll have a look at it, after supper."

"Lord, Alec, it isn't in your way. It would only bother you, and make you think me a fool. You're very kind,—but you'd better not trouble yourself to look at it."

"But I will though, old lass. When I am smoking my first pipe, and taking my No. 1 tumbler of 'Damont's Peculiar,' you shall tell me all about it, and then I'll read what you think the three best chapters."

Surprised and pleased at Alec's sudden interest in her literary work, Christina fetched the manuscript, and, while Alec was enjoying his first pipe and No. 1 tumbler, told him the plot and chief incidents of her story; and then putting the sheets by his side, she directed his attention to the passages which she regarded as the best in the tale.

For nearly an hour, Alec read the story, with every appearance of interest; and while he did so, Christina, wrapped in flannel—as ague-patients in the marshes were wont to wrap themselves,—sat by the fire, watching him intently.

"Well," said Alec, at length, putting down the papers, and assuming a critical tone, "it ain't so bad. The story has some good points. But I don't think it's by any means your best bit of writing."

"I am afraid you're right, Alec," answered Christina, in a tone of dejection.

"Now, here's a bit of your pen-work that beats those passages into fits. Just look at it—or stay, I'll read it to you. I am a good reader. 'Mr. Turrett, I implore you to have as few dealings as possible with Alec Barber. The writer of this knows him well, far better than you know him. He is a bad man, and is bent on plundering you. You are not the first gentleman who has repented of trying to help him. Be warned.' Now, you know, Mrs. Alec, that's short;—but it *does* go so to the point! I never read a bit o' your writing that I like half so much!"

"Husband," said Christina, rising from her chair, and letting fall the flannel cloak which she had thrown over her black dress, worn for her dead child, "I wrote that letter. You, of course, knew the handwriting, for there is no disguise about it. I did not sign my name,—because I shrunk from that last act of testimony against you. I am your wife; I can't forget it; I can't undo it. I am sorry of only one thing about the note: I repent not having signed it, for it would then have had greater force with the young Squire, and it would never have fallen into your hands."

"Bravo, Mrs. Alec! It's a pity you've crippled yourself. You ought to go on the stage again!"

"If you wish," continued Christina, with increased earnestness, "I'll write another letter to Mr. Turrett, and speak more fully in my own name. I tell you, Alec, you shan't hurt him,—if a weak woman can protect him. You know, I can tell him facts that would make him spurn you from him as—as—"

"As the knave I am," interposed Alec, with a smile. "That's what you'd like to say; but you dared not, for you're afraid I'd fell you to the ground with this bootjack."

"If you did, it wouldn't be the most brutal treatment I've received from you."

"Exactly, quite true, Mrs. Alec," returned the husband, in his most gentle manner, "I see you have a good memory. But come, you take too violent a view of this matter. You shouldn't give way to excitement, which may do you serious harm, now that you have the ague hanging about you. You mayn't think I'm angry about the note. Lord bless you, I like you for it. It's quite natural that you should think badly of me, for I'm your husband; it's quite natural that you should

love the young Squire, for he saved your life. Now sit down again, and let's talk about your novel!"

Never before had the woman been so afraid of him, as now that his pale, wicked face and cunning eyes smiled at her, and his tongue addressed her with mocking irony. Had he stormed at her with oaths and menaces, and struck her, she would have dreaded him less.

"Come, sit down," said Alec, pointing to the chair.

She obeyed; and the man rising put the flannel cloak once more over her shoulders, and brought it close round her neck with an air of affectionate solicitude.

"Now, I am going to repay evil with good. I am going to take you into my confidence; and give you the outline for a better story than that trumpery tale of yours. It is the outline of the story of your life. Now, do you pay especial attention to me."

While he thus spoke he took a pocket-book from his breast pocket, opened it, and took out one of several loose papers which it contained.

"First of all, look at that," he said, putting the paper before her, "do you see what it is?—You didn't know I was a collector of such curiosities? What is it?"

"It's a copy of a marriage certificate."

"Exactly: a copy of the certificate of marriage, in St. Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London, between Herbert Andrews and Christina Wylie, spinster. One of the witnesses, you see, is Shakespeare Wylie, your uncle. Look at the date. You see,—it's a certificate of your mother's marriage. Herbert Andrews was a barrister-at-law; but I'll tell you more about him in a minute. Now then have you read it?"

"Yes, I have read it."

"And here, Crissy, is another of my curiosities,—a copy of the registration of your birth. You may as well look at that too,—Christina, daughter of Herbert Andrews and Christina Andrews.—Now I have yet another curiosity for you. It is the registration of the burial of Christina Andrews. There, you have read it.—Now I'll talk to you.—Are you listening?"

"I am listening."

"It is clear, therefore, that your maiden name was Christina Andrews, not Christina Morris. Now, why did your uncle bring you up under a name to which you have no more right than I? Stop a minute, and I'll tell you. Herbert Andrews (the gentleman father of whom you are so proud) was convicted of theft and transported for life. To-morrow I'll let you read an account of his trial in a nice little book I have on my shelf there; but at present you may take my word for the fact. Thus you see,—you are a felon's daughter; and your uncle is a felon's brother-in-law. On the whole the old mountebank was not wrong in thinking you'd have a better chance of living down such a disgrace, if he never told you of it. But you see, it was your ill luck to fall across Alec Barber, and he has a strange delight in ferreting out ugly secrets."

"What became of my father? is he alive?" inquired Christina, in a whisper that was painful to the ear.

"I am going to tell you. He is alive, and has returned to his native country. I shan't tell you all I know about his history; for if scholars were to tell the world all they knew, they'd lose the best reward of their labours. I like to feel myself a little cleverer than my neighbours. But of this you may be quite

sure—your father is alive in this country, and I know where he is. I needn't remark that he has returned before the expiration of the term for which he was transported, for I have already told you that he was transported for life. If he were discovered, he would be hung; and as I know where he is to be found, I can say, with perfect modesty, that whenever it pleases me to do so I can hang your father."

He ceased, and for a minute meditated within himself, keeping a silence which Christina did not care to break.

"And hang me!" he observed in the same amiable tone, after the minute's deliberation, "if I don't let you a little more into my confidence, and tell you who your father is, and where he lives. He's at this present time a bookseller in the Buttermarket Street, Sedgehassock, and his name is John Braddock."

Christina started in her seat.

"Yes, Chrissy, it is rather a starter, isn't it?" said Alec, observing her movement of surprise, and coming down on her like a needle. "It is just what the classic writers, on which I was suckled in my youth, would call a starter! That's the name of it, and no mistake! Now you see why the respectable dealer in literature and stationery shed tears of emotion over your father's portrait. Why, bless you! the old rascal was looking at his own picture, and he snivelled to think what a change had come over his blessed countenance since the days of his sunny youth, *et cetera*! But now, Mrs. Alec, let's come to business, and have done with nonsense. I want to bring you to book."

"I am not trifling with your time. I am taking note of every word you say."

"As you ought to do. Well, then, mark me!"—

Alec Barber changed his voice from one of careless, contemptuous insolence to one of menace.

"Look you," he said, raising his right arm slightly, to render his words more impressive, "your uncle, the old mountebank, and John Braddock, *alias* Herbert Andrews, think that no one but themselves (and one other person, who shall be nameless) has their secret; and I have no doubt no one in all the world has their secret, except them, you, me, and that other person. Who that other is I am not going to tell you, for it wouldn't answer my purpose to do so; but you may take this comfort to yourself;—that other person isn't very likely to peach on the convict. But you may believe me;—I'm not so tender-hearted; and if you provoke me to it, I'll hang him up as high as Haman, though he is your own father, and the 'dear friend' of the old mountebank. If I ever catch you writing evil or speaking evil about me, I'll hang him up! If you dare to give hint to living mortal of what has passed between us to-night, I'll hang him up! If I ever catch you meddling in any way with my affairs, I'll hang him up! If he should take it into his head that he isn't quite as safe in Sedgehassock as he'd like to be, and should shift his quarters, the very day on which he leaves the old city I'll put the officers on his track, and when they've caught him—I'll hang him up! But—but, if you behave like a submissive, proper sort of wife, I'll let him live in peace, and die respected."

Again he paused, and again Christina did not care to break the silence.

"Now, Mrs. Barber," resumed the husband, "it'll be to your satisfaction to investigate this strange story a little more thoroughly; and as I wish to consult your feelings in every respect in which it is my interest to

consult them, I shall take you up to London with me next week, and show you the originals of those certificates, so that your own eyes may convince you that I have not been bamboozling you with a false story and sham copies of highly interesting documents. Then I'll bring you back to this snug little place ; and while I am in the 'corn country,' *plundering* the young Squire, you may meditate on our secret, and fill up this outline of a striking drama into a first-rate novel. As for this thing, it isn't worthy of your genius ;—it isn't, indeed :—and so I shall burn it. I shan't burn the anonymous note, though ; no, I shan't burn that,—but keep it amongst my other curiosities of literature."

As he thus spoke he took in hand the manuscript of poor Christina's tale, and threw packet No. 1 on the fire. When the flames had licked round and consumed it, he threw upon them packet No. 2 ; and having watched its destruction, he deliberately committed packet No. 3 to the blazing coals ; and so he went on steadily, destroying every slip of the paper on which poor Christina had spilt as much of tears as of ink.

When she had seen the last packet reduced to ashes, Christina Barber rose, and, trembling in every limb of her body, addressed her tyrant.

"Alec Barber, our child is dead," she said, with thrilling sadness.

"Who said she wasn't ? " retorted the husband.

"Nothing but the evil of our unhappy lives keeps us together now," she continued, speaking slowly, and with pathetic solemnity. "The good of them lies buried in my child's grave. Let me leave you, and live away from you,—trying to forget that I have ever known you. I promise to keep every secret of your career

that is known to me. Natural affection will seal my lips on the horrible revelations you have made to-night. Oh, Alec Barber, don't reject this entreaty, don't refuse my last prayer to you. Have mercy upon me,—have mercy upon me.—Let me leave you."

"Well," exclaimed Alec, with a laugh, "that's a pretty cool request. Let you leave me. No, Mrs. Alec;—I let you live away from me for a good long whack of time once; but since then I have become a reformed character, and have a higher sense of marital duty. You are my wife, Mrs. Alec,—and I mean to exercise my marital authority over you. I shall take you, ague and all, up to London with me next week; and when I bring you back, you'll continue to live here, and I wont let you stir an inch out of the parish, unless it be to go down to Easthaven to shop. There's no doubt this place is unhealthy; but since it's good enough for your husband, it must be good enough for you. You see, Mrs. Alec,—when you were a gushing, disinterested girl, you took me for worse as well as for better. So, if it was necessary for me to live in a yet more pestiferous swamp than Little Deane, you'd have to come along with me. So now you've got my answer to your modest proposal. And now, Mrs. Alec,—unless you wish to shed a few last tears over the ashes of your pretty tale,—you may go off to bed, and reflect on my marital authority over you, and how I mean to exercise it."

Whereupon, Christina left the room, as she was ordered.

"A likely notion," muttered Alec Barber to himself, when the door had closed upon her, and he had mixed another stiff tumbler of 'Damont's Peculiar' "that I should let her leave me, now that we've got

into such a comfortable understanding as to who I am,—and who she is ! Precious likely ! No, no, Master Alec,—you know a trick worth two of that !”

But Alec Barber was wrong. He didn't know a trick worth two of that.

Far better would it have been for him, far worse perhaps for those who were marked as victims for his villany, if he had listened to the prayer of that poor captive woman, and acceding to it, had let her live away from him,—supporting herself in lowly labour, or accepting the home which her uncle was ready to give her. Far better had it been for him if he had said, “Go free. Respect my secrets, as you dread my resentment. I will leave you in peace, so long as you abstain from thwarting my plans. Let this be our compact ; and as long as you keep it, I'll trouble myself about you no more than if you were a dead dog.” Had he said this, the woman would have left him, and he would have been quit of one—who had woman's will, and woman's courage, and woman's patience, and woman's craft, to do him injury.

But he was bent on having her in his house, crouching at his feet,—a menial slave ; forgetting that a submissive slave may be only waiting for an opportunity to become an active enemy. He argued as to what she would be, from recollections of what she had been, omitting to consider the wide difference between ‘the now’ and ‘the then ;’ between ‘the now’ in which she was bound to him by nothing but evil, and ‘the then’ in which she was chained to him by strong love of her child.

At that very time, whilst her owner (by force of marital authority) was congratulating himself on his triumph over her, gained by merciless blows struck at

the best feelings of her woman's nature, what was she doing in the cold room upstairs, whither she had taken her poor shivering body and her terror-stricken mind, to the tears and silent brooding of a sleepless bed?

Even in her alarm, and in the first tumult of that vengeful hate which she had kept in restraint for years and years, out of tenderness to her child, she was meditating how she could circumvent, out-plot, overthrow, crush—the hateful enemy of her life, who was bent on making her a servant to his infamous purposes. She recalled the hideous disclosures he had just made,—the hideous menace he had used. But they did not deter her from hoping that she might still protect the young Squire of Castle Hollow; they only made her resolve to use greater vigilance and caution in acting against her husband.

As for the facts of those disclosures,—that she was the child of a felon, and that her father's security from an ignominious death depended on the will of a man who was ready on a moment's provocation to turn informer against him,—she felt no personal shame at the discovery, which only roused in her an awful pity for the fate of a parent who, whatever his faults had been, was still beloved by the old friend of his youth—by the uncle who had befriended her from infancy upwards. She recalled the few tender words he spoke to her on the occasion of his visit to her wretched home. She remembered the sorrow of his face when he looked at his own likeness,—to which he had grown so sadly unlike. And whilst her mind was full of these recollections, she turned, shivering and coughing, in her bed, and prayed, “Oh, Father in Heaven—help my earthly father!”

CHAPTER II.

JOHN BRADDOCK'S RESOLUTION.

MR. ALEXANDER BARBER was as good as his word to the woman who had taken him for better and for worse. He carried her up to London, and caused her to examine the evidence that she was a felon's daughter ; but he abstained from communicating to her all the discoveries he had made with regard to the felon's career. He gave her no hint that a mysterious connection existed between John Braddock, bookseller, Buttermarket Street, Sedgehassock, and Adelaide Turrett, of the Hollow House, Castle Hollow—a connection with every feature of which he had made himself familiar. He gave her no intimation that he was in possession of a terrible secret,—a secret which the old Squire of the Hollow House and his daughter had for nearly thirty years laboured to live down in the darkness of falsehood ;—a secret which gave him a not less fearful power over the young Squire and every member of the Castle Hollow family, than that power of life and death which he held over the escaped convict.

It was his purpose to tell her only that which he supposed would reduce her to abject fear of him and craven submission to him. So he left her in complete ignorance as to what might be the exact nature of his designs on Edgar Turrett—and what might be the means to which he trusted for the achievement of his ends.

Having brought her back from London, exhausted with illness, and bodily fatigue, and mental distress, he left her in the lonely marsh of Little Deane, to fight her ague with powdered bark, and to devise schemes by which she might warn John Braddock of his danger, and protect Edgar Turrett from spoliation—in such a manner that no risk would be incurred of exciting Alec Barber's suspicions, and provoking him to fulfil the menace by which he had terrified her, into active hostility—not passive obedience.

Alec Barber was absent from home nearly three weeks, keeping a sharp eye on business in the 'corn country,' and elsewhere; and during those three weeks an event occurred which was a very good counter-movement to the confidential communications by which he had established a 'pleasant understanding between himself and his wife.'

In the first of the three weeks, Christina wrote a letter to her uncle, asking him to inform Mr. Braddock that her novel had been unfortunately destroyed by fire, and telling him that the cause of its destruction was her husband, who, in a fit of malignity, had thrown it on the flames, for the sake of paining her. She dared not tell the manager all that had recently passed between herself and Alec—of his disclosures and her discoveries—of their journey up to London. She was afraid that if she communicated those facts to Mr.

Wylie, he or John Braddock might be roused to hasty and ill-advised measures, which would bring upon them the vengeance of her husband. She was determined on making no false step. But it was necessary to inform Mr. Braddock that she should not need his services as an agent with London publishers, and advisable that she should let her uncle know that she and her husband were not at peace with each other.

That letter, worded with caution, had its consequences.

It reached the manager whilst he and his company were at the first town 'of circuit,'—indeed, just as they were preparing to leave it, and once more occupy the Great Massiter theatre.

"A prodigious reprobate—a scandal on Christian civilization!" exclaimed Mr. Shakespeare Wylie, pushing away toast-rack and tea-cup, and almost upsetting his little breakfast-table in his indignation. "That hideous Goth, to wring the sensitive heart of a woman, has destroyed a work of genius! Poor Christina! Poor soul! Why does the Almighty suffer villains to live when He has thunderbolts at his command? Merciful heavens! He burnt it! He saw the flames creep up, and devour a sublime production of art,—and like Nero he rejoiced! And she's ill, too! The marsh-fever is preying on the exquisite tenderness and sacred beauty of my child's form, and I cannot rescue her—cannot help her—cannot comfort her!"

To which words of magniloquent grief and horror, the old actor added an exclamation of anger and disgust—an exclamation compounded of 'pshaw!' and 'sharr,' and prolonged into a shriek of wrath, which caused Mr. Wylie's landlady on the ground-floor to pause in her ironing and remark to a friend that "it

was wholly beautiful to hear Mr. Wylie act when he was by himself, for he came out stronger in his own room by himself (you understand, my dear, when he is by himself) than ever he did at the theatre."

On the present occasion the landlady's approving criticisms were cut short by a knock at her street-door, on opening which she was asked by an unknown gentleman if Mr. Wylie, the manager of the theatre, lodged in the house?

"Yes, sir; he's upstairs."

The caller was forthwith led upstairs, and was cordially received by the actor.

"My good old friend, my dear and most beloved companion," exclaimed Mr. Shakespeare Wylie, "you wrote me that I shouldn't see you till I was established at Great Massiter."

"I started a few days sooner than I intended, and I have made a quicker journey than I expected," answered John Braddock, carefully wiping his spectacles with his handkerchief, when he had replied to his friend's greeting. "Business is brisk. Orders are heavy; and as I must get back to Sedgehassock to send goods off to my outlying customers of the trade, I shan't let the grass grow under my feet. I shall have left Great Massiter, and shall be working on towards Easthaven, before you quit this place."

"Read that letter, John Braddock," abruptly returned the old tragedian, who had habituated himself to the use of his companion's new name. "It's the best news I have for you. Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes—I want neither bite nor drink," said the bookseller, taking up the letter, and becoming quickly interested in it.

Whilst John Braddock was so engaged, the manager

spoke no word, but, lighting pipe, found relief for his emotions in smoking, and playing with the tassel of his cap.

"No business for you at Little Deane, anyhow, you see?" observed the actor, when Mr. Braddock, after deliberately perusing the letter, laid it aside. "The rascal has burnt poor Christina's story. So, my dear friend, you can no longer look to that as an excuse for holding communication with her. Didn't I tell you that the child's death would do *him* no good? Did I not say to you that your hopes were groundless, and that if the ruffian softened for a day, he'd be all the harder at the end of a month."

"She's ill," curtly answered the bookseller.

"How should she be otherwise in that swamp?"

"She's alone,—at least, *he* isn't with her?"

"He'll be away for another fortnight."

For a minute, the grave, quiet-mannered tradesman was silent.

"Before I get back to Sedgehassock I'll see her," he said, in a firm, low voice, at the end of the minute.

The actor started, as he asked—

"What! see her at Little Deane?"

"Ay! the scoundrel wont let her come to Sedgehassock. So I'll go to her."

"Though he isn't at home, he'll know of your visit."

"Let him."

Mr. Wylie again made a movement of surprise and uneasiness, as he observed, in tones of caution and fear—

"John Braddock, don't be rash. If he is already on your track, as you've too many reasons to suppose

he is, why do any thing that may give him another clue to the secret which we hope to live down? You ought to leave Sedgehassock, and seek some retreat, where,—even if he should discover the fact about which we never speak,—he cannot discover you. But you won't take my advice!"

"If he is on *my* track, I am on *his*," returned the other, in his small, hard, mysterious voice.

"There's this difference between you, he *knows* what he is after, while you only *suspect*."

"I know his game, as well as he knows it himself. You are wrong as to the difference between us, which is this,—while I *know* his game, he does not even suspect mine. Listen, Wylie, I don't suspect he is on my track, I *know* it. The man has been up in London, searching registers for the purpose of ascertaining my early history. The same clerks who furnished him with copies of certificates of my marriage, my wife's death, my daughter's birth, have informed my agent of his inquiries and discoveries. He is ferreting out other secrets of which I am a partner. Let him beware! He is a cunning knave; but John Braddock can be more cunning, and is less a knave.—Let him beware!"

"Old friend," said the actor, tremulously, "it is for you to beware, not for him. Remember, if he gain your secret, *what he can do*."

"He *has* gained it, Wylie. And I *know* what he can do,—if he is quick enough."

"For heaven's sake, fly," returned the manager, turning pale.

"No, Wylie; if I fly, I leave him to carry out his damnable schemes, which, if God will help me, I'll frustrate;—schemes they are which you cannot imagine, and I may not tell you."

"You're in his power,—you're in the power of an utter villain."

"That remains to be proved. Anyhow, there is no danger yet. He wont inform against me till he has first tried to extract money from me. When he gives me that warning, it'll be time enough to decide whether I ought to fly. Don't fear for me, Wylie. I know my man."

There was such firmness, as well as quietude, in his voice and manner that the manager was compelled to yield to his old friend's resolute will.

"So I will go on to Easthaven, and make the regular calls on my trade customers there; and I'll take an opportunity to go over to Little Deane. I'll see her, and if it appear right to do so, I'll tell her who I am."

"What, John Braddock,—take away from her the last chance she has of 'living *it* down'?"

"That chance has already gone from her. *He* knows my secret,—and do you suppose that he wont sooner or later make it known to her?"

"Poor child! poor child!" muttered the actor, as the tears rolled down his worn face.

"Wylie," returned the other, slowly, gently, and very impressively—speaking words which he intended to be words of comfort—"there are many ways of living down shame and sorrow. They may be lived down in secret, without sympathy,—or openly, with love. They may be lived down with the terror of cowards, or with honest courage. They may be lived down with craven fear of the world's opinion, or the comfort which comes from the lips of generous friends,—friends generous as I have found you, Wylie. At the worst, they may be lived down under cruel obloquy, till that time comes when the wicked and the weary alike find rest."

In such fashion did John Braddock repeat his determination to play out the perilous game in which he was engaged.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTINA'S VISITOR.

THE consequences of Christina's letter were important. In the first place it induced John Braddock to speak much more freely to the manager, than he had intended to speak for some time, of the information he had received of Alec Barber's inquiries in London. In the second place it inspired him with a determination to make himself known, in his real name and character, to his daughter.

"Sooner or later," John Braddock said to himself, summing up the arguments for and against the revelation, "her husband will tell her who I am. He may tell her for the purpose of making her more submissive to his control than she already is; or he may tell her out of sheer brutality, to frighten and wound her, without any ulterior object; but sooner or later he is sure to speak *one* truth to her, even though he never tell her *another*. It will therefore do no harm, and may save her some pain, if I anticipate him—by communicating the intelligence myself. Moreover, I already want her

assistance ; indeed, if I am to succeed in counterplotting his designs on Miss Turrett's nephew, I *must* secure her aid. As to the general nature of those designs, I of course can have no doubt. He not only knows my shame, but the lady's wrong. He has obtained possession of the secret which that pure, noble woman has striven so long to conceal ; and in due course he will use it to extort money from young Mr. Turrett. Of that there can be no doubt ; and it is impossible to say what sacrifices a proud and high-spirited young gentleman may be induced to make, for the sake of preserving untarnished the reputation of his family. But Mr. Edgar Turrett shan't be hurt if I can help it. I will preserve him, even if I have to stain my soul with a scoundrel's blood. No act of violence, however, may be required, if I render myself familiar with Barber's proceedings,—above all with the particulars of his intercourse with Mr. Edgar. No one is more likely to obtain useful information for me than his own wife. Kept out of his confidence though she is, she still must be able to act, to some extent, as a spy upon his movements. At least she can let me know when he is absent from Little Deane ;—to have even that information would be something ! She can also (if I supply her with keys) examine his chests, and tell me what papers they contain.—To have that information may be everything !

“She cannot hesitate to aid me. Between the husband who has treated her with brutality, and the father who loves her dearly ; between the husband who is bent on plundering the man who saved her life, and the father who would gladly sacrifice his life to protect her rescuer ; between the husband who holds the power of life and death over her father, and the father

whose wretchedness can but recommend him more strongly to her filial affection,—what woman would falter in her choice? Not the fine creature whom dear Wylie cannot speak of save with emotion. Not she. She must be mine. Nature draws us together. A common cause will unite us. All the best qualities of her heart make her *my* friend,—*his* enemy!

“As for myself? as for my danger and shame? What are they that I should give them a thought? What is a little more or a little less shame to my poor child, that I should place my own security from an ignominious death above my duty to Miss Turrett, my duty to that good woman who has nobly pardoned me, who nobly loves me still, whose tomb will bear the words, ‘Faithful unto Death: Faithful after Death.’ Let me too be faithful unto death,—at least to her! When I parted from her in the Abbey Gardens, I said, ‘Would that God would permit the last days of my wretched life to be marked by some service that might prove my fidelity to you,—some act that might atone in a small degree for the suffering I have brought upon you, and show that my love was loyal to you at the first, and, unchanged by degradation and time, was loyal to the last.’—Yes, I will be faithful to her. However I die—on a not dishonoured bed, or by the gallows—I will nurse the consciousness that I am not utterly evil,—utterly despicable.”

With such thoughts, after bidding the manager adieu, John Braddock rode his stout black horse in the direction of Great Massiter. His saddle was fitted before and behind with cases containing samples of the goods for which he was seeking orders from the retail stationers of the ‘light lands;’ and as he proceeded at a leisurely pace over heath and wold, along broad coach

roads and meandering lanes, past hamlets and homesteads, past taverns and way-side cottages, he presented, to those whom he encountered, the appearance of an ordinary mounted packman. He seemed what he was, a respectable tradesman on his rounds to visit the shops of petty dealers. No one, of the many persons who for a minute regarded him sitting between his packs, and trotting along at the steady rate of six miles an hour, imagined the strange part he had already played, and the stranger part he was still to play in—a romance of real life. Not seldom, in the course of his devious route, he entered villages which he had visited, and accosted persons with whom he had exchanged words, when he made his first trading journey through the 'light lands' as a walking packman. But no one recognized him. So great was the difference of appearance between William Newton, the tramp-ing pedlar, and John Braddock, the superior tradesman.

Towards the close of the sixth day, after his last interview with Shakespeare Wylie, John Braddock had transacted all his business at Easthaven, and mounting his black horse, rode away from the town by the Sedgehassock turnpike road.

Having left the seaport town a mile or two behind him, he turned into a by-road, and rousing his horse to a heavy three-quarter gallop, made good speed over the marshes to Little Deane. The exercise of brisk riding was a good preservative against the baneful miasma rising from the low meadows; and when he drew rein at Alec Barber's gate, instead of being chilled, he felt a warm tingling in every nerve of his body. Staid, and more than middle-aged in appearance, he was still a vigorous and active man.

Having secured his horse, by passing the bridle

rein round the gate-post, John Braddock threw his overcoat upon the beast's loins, and then walked stealthily across the garden. It was a dark night; but there was light in the parlour window. What if Alec Barber had again returned sooner than had been expected, and was sitting by his fire? As this thought occurred to the visitor, he stept noiselessly up to the window, and through the same opening which had previously enabled Alec Barber to watch his wife, her uncle, and her father, he inspected the interior of the room.

At a glance, he saw that Alec Barber was not there.

The solitary occupant of the room was Christina. Thin and death-like pale, she lay upon the sofa before the fire, with her face so turned that her father could see the havoc which bodily illness and mental distress had made of its beauty. She was dressed in black, but she had so enveloped herself in flannel wrappings that only a small portion of her dark dress was visible.

How should he attract her attention? How should he introduce himself to her notice?

If it could be managed, he wished his presence at Little Deane should be known only to her. Fearing that any letter to her might fall into the hands of her husband, he had not written to forewarn her of his approach.

How could he attract her attention, and at the same time alarm her as little as possible?

As this question presented itself to his mind, he reflected that there was no light in the kitchen window,—an absence which justified a suspicion that no one was in that apartment; in which case it was possible for him to enter the house unobserved, and announce his arrival to Christina by appearing in her parlour. A few

seconds' deliberation decided him to adopt this course. Walking upon the grass, where his tread was inaudible, he hastened round the end of the house, lifted the latch of the outer door, and then in less than ten ticks of a watch, stood in the kitchen,—which was without candle, and, as he had conjectured, without occupant. So far all was well.

It now only remained to cross the kitchen and open the parlour door.

In effecting this, he exercised caution in a manner which, though it may seem a trifle, deserves notice as an indication how well fitted the wary man was to play a perilous part in a perilous game. When he stood on the rug at the outer door, he remembered that on his former visit to Little Deane he had noticed, amongst other arrangements of the furniture, a carpet which, covering only the middle of the floor, left the bricks at all other parts of the area exposed. He must step from the rug to this carpet, so that his feet would make no noise on the bricks.

Encompassed by darkness, he calculated the distance accurately, stepped from the rug to the carpet, felt his way noiselessly to the parlour-door, opened it, and after crossing the threshold closed it behind him,—ere his daughter had given heed to one of his movements.

She was not asleep, but in that condition of drowsy unobservance from which sick people not seldom obtain a substitute for the complete refreshment of healthy slumber.

"Christina," he said softly, after a pause.

In an instant the woman had sprung up from her sofa, and was standing face to face, with her visitor.

"Oh, father,—father!" she replied, to his address—speaking in a suppressed voice of terror and extreme

agitation, "why are you here? Oh, father, you do not know the peril you run! God protect you! I can't! I can't!"

As she spoke she extended her thin hands towards him; and in that act, not less than in the tone and substance of her words, John Braddock saw that she loved him, though he was a convicted felon.

"Hush! Be calm!" returned the father. "Are we in danger of being overheard?"

"No," answered Christina, quickly, "no, not at present,—I thank God for it! I am alone in the house, and shall be so for two hours more."

"Child, how did you know me to be your father?"

"*He*,—he, my husband," she replied with an effort, "knows all. He has discovered everything. I would have warned you ere this, but I dared not. I feared, I know not what I feared. Oh, dear, dear father, he has you in his power, and he is a wicked, cruel, clever man.—Fear him, fear him!"

"Oh, dear child," answered John Braddock, the quiet self-reliance of his manner and voice doing much to allay her paroxysm of alarm, "I will not fear him; I fear no man, but God alone. I have known for weeks past the full extent of his discoveries, but I did not think he would have thus soon imparted them to you. I came to you this night to tell you the history of my wretched life, to implore your pity, your love,—in spite of my shame. But there is no need for me to speak about the worst of it. Darling, you do not shrink from me?"

To which pathetic inquiry, put by a father to his only daughter, Christina replied by throwing her arms round his neck, and sobbing on his breast,—sobbing as though she were a little child.

Then John Braddock, sitting down upon the sofa, and drawing his child to his side, told her the story of his life,—at least that much of his life in which she had nearest personal concern. He spoke to her of her mother, of his gladness when she (that mother's only child) was born. He spoke to her of the brief sunshine of his wedded life, of the gloom in which the sunshine closed. He solemnly assured her that he never committed the crime for which he was transported, and earnestly implored her to believe—even as her uncle believed—that he was a felon in name only, not in act. He did not communicate to her 'the secret' which existed between himself and Miss Turrett of the Hollow House, but he told her that he had strong reasons for wishing to preserve from wrong the man who had saved her life. He stated not what they were, but he spoke of the existence of facts which had come to Alec Barber's knowledge,—and by which that cruel knave hoped to ruin the young Squire in purse, and character, and reputation. And in his low, steady, impressive voice he made Christina see that his resolution was as unalterable as it was noble,—to remain at Sedgehassock, regardless of all risk, until he was satisfied that he could not longer effect aught in counterplotting the schemes of Edgar Turrett's enemy.

For more than an hour and a half the father and daughter sat together; and when they parted they knew and loved each other, with that completeness of knowledge and love which ought to exist between parents and children.

"Dear child," said John Braddock, as he prepared to take his leave, "be brave and true to this our purpose, and God will reward you. Your life, like your father's, is one of wretchedness, but its sorrow will

be diminished now that you have a worthy aim—an end that is well worth endurance of cruelty and long self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice is the surest comforter of earthly sorrows. Would that the unhappy could always see it!—Be brave and hopeful. Don't be despondent about your health. Take as much daily exercise as your strength will bear; and I and dear Wylie will take care that you are well supplied with the new medicine, quinine, which will appear to work miracles for you. Be brave, be brave! We shall find opportunities for safe correspondence,—even for seeing each other. And when you are most unhappy, my darling—when the sympathy of your wretched father is no sufficient solace to you—look above, look above!—We both have a Father there.”

At the gate John Braddock found his horse champing the bit, and impatient to continue his journey.

Once more in his saddle, the Sedgehassock tradesman galloped across the marsh-land to the turnpike road; and then, slackening his pace, went on at a steady trot to the next town, where he had business to transact;—the town where he had decided to stop the night.

At the end of four more days he was again in Sedgehassock,—waiting on his customers in the Butter-market Street, with that quiet courtesy and intelligence which had already gained him favour with the leading inhabitants of the city.

“Our new bookseller,” the zealous Bishop of Sedgehassock had said to more than one of his clergy, “is a very superior man for a person in his way of life. He has considerable knowledge of books, and is a regular attendant at the services of the Cathedral. I make it a point to encourage him.”

“Carley’s successor,” the Mayor of Sedgehassock observed to his brother aldermen, “is a quiet, civil, sensible fellow, and a good man of business. He’ll do well in the city. And I think we ought to give him a fair share of the Corporation printing; for, though he is a new-comer, he represents an old business;—and he has treated poor Carley’s widow most liberally.”

By which speeches readers are enabled to see that John Braddock had managed to please the ‘Close set’ and the ‘City set;’—two sets which at Sedgehassock were wont to be antagonistic.

Thus was the new-comer ‘living his secret down.’

CHAPTER IV.

EDGAR'S FIGHT WITH THE RECTOR COMES TO AN END.

DURING the summer and autumn of 1821 Edgar saw less of Alec Barber than he had done for some months before. They sold their mare, and ceased to act together on the light-land race-courses. But though they thus far parted company, rumour continued to speak of them as close associates, and to give the young Squire a 'bad name,'—which of all evils is the one most difficult for a man to live down.

Rumour, it must be admitted, found support and justification in outward appearances; for, though Edgar had resolved never again to be mixed up in money matters with the black-leg, he continued to treat him publicly with cordial patronage. When the time came round for the Merton-Piggott races, the rector's party made a strong demonstration against them; several 'quality' families of the town and neighbourhood giving notice that they would not be present at them, and even Dr. Magnum intimating a fear that professional engagements would prevent him from visiting

the course. On the day of sport the ground was badly attended, the farmers of the country and the tradespeople of the town finding very few of the gentry to keep them in countenance. But Alec Barber (who had never before attended the Merton-Piggott races) was there; and so, also, was Edgar Turrett, who, true to his foolish threat of fighting the rector, entered a horse for the hurdle-race, and, riding it himself, won the first prize.

The triumph gave the gentleman-jockey little satisfaction; for, as he dismounted in the presence of the huzza-ing mob, he felt that he had made a fool of himself, and given needless pain to Carry Bromhead.

Almost up to the day of the races, Carry made light of Edgar's vow to take a prominent part in them, professing that she regarded his threat as mere playfulness, and more than once saying to him: "Don't be so foolish, Edgar. If you continue to *say* it, you'll feel in honour bound to do it." But when the girl learnt that her lover's horse was actually entered, she was greatly disturbed, and asked herself, "How can I stop him without seeming to give him an order? It is so imprudent. How can I stop him?"

Just as this question was troubling her, Edgar entered the Gray Street drawing-room, where she was sitting without a companion, and going straight to the subject of her thoughts, observed: "Well, Carry, I have brought my horse into town, and he'll stand at the 'Melford Arms' till the day after to-morrow, when your rector shall have an opportunity of seeing how I ride.—Alec Barber is coming to-morrow, and will give him a gallop over the ground."

"Papa will be sorry to hear it, Edgar," observed the young lady.

"Indeed!—why hasn't he told me so?"

"It isn't his way to tell people what he wishes them to do about trifles."

"Why do you think he'll be annoyed?"

"Because he likes Mr. Reeve very much, and thinks he does a great deal of good in the town. And Mr. Reeve doesn't wish the races to be kept up."

"You should have said this before, Carry," said the young Squire, looking as he had never before looked in Carry's presence.

"I would, Edgar, if I had thought you in earnest."

"Well, beauty, it's too late to draw back now, isn't it? I have entered the horse, and paid the entrance money. It wouldn't do to let people say your father wont let me be in the running. Would it?"

"Of course, you are the best judge of that, dear," returned Carry, declining to be tricked out of any sort of consent to her lover's arrangements.

Having just stopped short of saying "Edgar, dear, I hope you wont ride in the hurdle-race," Carry turned to another topic; and not a word more was said of the races during Edgar's visit, which did not exceed an hour, as he had to return to Castle Hollow to dinner.

On his homeward ride the young Squire was far from pleased with the situation in which he was placed. Of course had Carry expressly asked him not to play the jockey in the town where she resided, he would have complied with her wish, however much he might have disliked such an interference with his amusements. But he did not feel himself bound to pay the same respect to her father's feelings. Indeed, in her anxiety not to express her wishes in a manner that might offend her lover, Carry had taken a

course which irritated him more than emphatic dictation would have done. The rough side of Mr. Edgar Turrett's nature took fire from the thought that he (member of 'ancient quality' that he was) had received an intimation that he was to guide his steps according to the whims and scruples of an elderly tradesman, whose daughter he intended to raise to gentle position. In justice to him it must be admitted that, if John Bromhead had been a poor man, this absurd and contemptible imagination would never have taken possession of the young Squire's mind; but the fact that the merchant was wealthy enough to be worth the trouble of courting made Edgar captious about his personal dignity and independence. The suspicion seized him that Carry had been 'set on' by her father to dissuade him from riding in the race; and in consequence of that suspicion, Carry's affectionate mention of her father's feelings came to appear nothing else than a delicate menace of his displeasure. With another bound of imagination, Edgar regarded himself as insulted by his future father-in-law, who had assumed the right of governing him. "He supposes I daren't run counter to his foibles, because he is rich!—the fear of offending him means the fear of losing a share of his money!" muttered Edgar. "Gad! he thinks the rattle of his money-bags will make me quake in my shoes. He imagines that I'd turn psalm-singer for the sake of an extra five thousand pounds of Carry's fortune at my own disposal. He doesn't know me! He doesn't know me!" Of course, a Turrett of the Turretts could not endure such insult. And the young Squire rode home to Castle Hollow, fretting and fuming in a fashion on which he was greatly ashamed to reflect a few days afterwards.

So, to show his high spirit and superiority to base self-interest, as well as to fight the rector, and thereby show that 'cant' wasn't going to carry it with a high hand over the old gentry of the 'light lands,' Edgar rode in the hurdle-race, and won.

Whilst he was on the course, Carry was in her private room, struggling against those thoughts (already mentioned) which persisted in coming upon her at unguarded moments, and which she did her best to look away from. "What will come of it? what will come of it?" Carry asked herself, beating her little hands together in her agony. "What will he do next? He can't really love me, or he would have done as I wished—in such a trifle; and when, too, I asked him to consider papa's feelings—not mine! What will come of it?" And, unable to answer this question satisfactorily, Carry—following the wise way of good women, when they are in trouble—fell upon her knees, and poured forth her sorrows to ears that are ever quick to hear the cries of the distressed.

But to all her companions Carry showed a serene countenance, and gave cheerful words. Are there any to exclaim against this effort to conceal and mislead?—any who see the sin of hypocrisy in the mode by which Carry sought to keep her secret to herself, to protect Edgar from harsh criticism, to spare her father and mother, and Fanny Magnum, pain?

Be it sin or no sin, the artifice was not in all respects successful. Silently watching her child, Martha saw the conflict of her mind, and was not ill-pleased to witness it.

"Thank God!" said Martha Bromhead, piously, "they are getting asunder—they will never marry."

The evening of the race-day was an evening for the

town-club to meet. It was a fuller gathering than usual; and Mr. Stephen Dowse, who was in the highest spirits and best possible humour, trampled on Timothy Tiltcot twice, and plattered no less than six times at Mr. Moss, before he entered upon his second tumbler.

"Young Squire Turrett rode in splendid style," said Mr. Tiltcot, picking himself up after being trampled upon for the second time. "He can ride—and no mistake about it!"

These words were addressed to the bank-agent; for it was Timothy Tiltcot's rule to cover the discomfiture of being trampled upon by a display of additional urbanity to the enemy who had just walked over his prostrate dignity. Only three minutes before Mr. Dowse had authoritatively told him that he (Timothy Tiltcot) was ignorant how the members of his own family had formerly spelt their names,—and had crushed him with the astounding assertion, that the Mawlingtops used to put two *l*'s in their name, and that Poverish (of the Poverishes of Winfarthing) in former times, had the dignity of a second *v*. Any man less amiable than Mr. Tiltcot, would forthwith have challenged the bank-agent to mortal combat, or sulked for the rest of the evening. But Timothy only picked himself up, smoothed his ruffled feathers, took a sip of grog, and then, with voice and countenance eloquent of courtesy, offered himself once more to the trampler.

"He can ride,—and no mistake about it!"

"Yes,—he can ride," assented Stephen Dowse.—"He is so fond of riding,—it's almost a pity he hasn't to get his living by it."

"With your cousin Bromhead's money, and his patrimonial estate," observed Professor Bandalin, who, now that the Assembly Rooms had fallen upon evil

days, deemed it prudent to be doubly polite to the members of the town-club, "he'll have enough to do in the way of spending money, without thinking about how it is earned."

"When a man makes it his business," Stephen replied, "to spend money, it is astonishing how much business he can get through in a short time. It's sometimes a faster dance to a debtor's prison, Professor, —than any dance you are likely to teach your pupils."

"True, sir, true—but dances are getting more rapid every year. The fashion is all for speed, instead of dignity."

To this remark the bank-agent responded contemptuously, "Granted.—What of it?"

And Professor Bandalin, being powerless to make anything of it, covered his confusion by looking down at his shoes.

"You saw the hurdle-race, Mr. Moss?" interposed Timothy Tiltot, amiably desirous to draw off attention from the Professor's overthrow.

"Well, sir, I was on the course,—and I ain't quite blind."

"No, no, Mr. Moss,—you can see as far as most people,—both ways, and round the corner."

"Happy to drink towards you, Mr. Tiltot," responded the agriculturist, delighted with the compliment. "Soft rum, this,—strong and soft,—pure Jamaica. You, sir, who've been in the wine and spirit trade, ought to know!"

"Pure Jamaica, sir,—pure as innocence," assented Mr. Tiltot, who was as able to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics, as to distinguish between genuine and adulterated rum.

"And you liked the hurdle-race?" asked Mr. Moss.

"It was a good race,—that's what I think."

"My feeling is," says Professor Bandalin, "that public thanks are due to Mr. Turrett for keeping up sport in the way he does."

"And for encouraging a set of sharpers and blacklegs to prey on people who happen to be honest, and can't help being fools?" put in Mr. Stephen Dowse, sharply. "Ay, Professor Bandalin? You think the gratitude of the public ought to fall on a young spark, who encourages such a scamp as that Alec Barber—dining with him at the Melford Arms—and letting him ride his horse on the heath yesterday? Ay, Professor? If that's your notion of morality, you wont have the Christian parents of young children coming to your shop."

"There's no saying you are not right, Mr. Dowse. Racing is a dangerous amusement; and if report says true, young Squire Turrett has burnt his fingers at it," observed Mr. Steed, ancient and dilapidated apothecary.

"And report speaks true sometimes.—I don't tell you that Stephen Dowse could help report the way she is going in this matter,—and I don't tell you Stephen Dowse couldn't!" rejoined the bank-agent, shaking his head, and by a significant glance inviting Mr. Tilcot to indulge in depreciating criticisms of Edgar Turrett's proceedings.

Accepting the suggestion, Mr. Tilcot began timidly, "Well, it's a new thing for gentlemen to turn themselves into jockeys, at least in the 'light lands.' But still, times do change. Ever since turnip husbandry came in, things have been changing more and more."

"If," interposed Mr. Moss, putting a case, "a young gentleman has a horse, why shouldn't he ride it?"

"Ay, exactly," put in Professor Bandalin, "and if he rides it, what matters where he rides it? or how he dresses himself? or when he rides it?"

"That's all very well," rejoined Mr. Tilcot, looking at Stephen Dowse for approval, "but gentlemen are gentlemen, and jockeys are jockeys, and I, for one, don't like to see a gentleman forget his dignity. Mr. Turrett has his family dignity to think of."

Seizing the opportunity, to which he had led his unsuspecting victim, Stephen Dowse laid Mr. Tilcot prostrate and trampled on him for the third time.

"Please to recollect, Mr. Tilcot," Mr. Dowse observed, with much loftiness, "you are speaking of a gentleman who one of these days will be a member of my family,—my family, sir! Standing in the position that I do to my cousin Bromhead, whose daughter is destined to be Mrs. Edgar Turrett, I must request you to adopt a different tone when you speak of the young Squire. You, sir, are careless about your family matters, and don't care a snap how your ancestors spelt their names. But that isn't my way, Mr. Tilcot!—and my very best respects to you, sir!"

The members of 'the club' were of opinion that Stephen Dowse had never proved himself such good company before, maintaining that the way in which he took Mr. Tilcot up, and put him down, and then walked over him, was beautiful—perfectly beautiful!

While the town-club thus discussed the course pursued by Mr. Edgar Turrett, he was riding slowly back to Castle Hollow, having at an early hour left the thinly attended table of the 'Race Dinner;' and the excitement of the day over, he was in a state of gloomy dissatisfaction with himself and all the world, except Carry (whom he loved more devotedly

than the poor girl just then believed), and his grandfather and aunt (for whom his reverence and affection were ever constant and unselfish.)

In the darkness and quietude of the solitary night the truth presented itself to him, and its aspect put an end to the passing elation caused by the wine he had taken at dinner. He had given Carry pain—wilfully, inexcusably, brutally. He felt that if he could change places with her, he (as Carry Bromhead) would send her (as Edgar Turrett) an intimation that their engagement was at an end. He saw also that, far from having had any just cause of offence with John Bromhead, the merchant had always treated him with the most delicate consideration. Edgar was a frank-hearted, honest fellow, and had courage enough to acknowledge that he had put himself into a fury about nothing, had been captious without reason, had acted the part of a simpleton. Had he been living thirty years later he would have called himself ‘a snob’; but that admirable word not having been invented in 1821, he relieved his mind by saying, “I have been showing myself a contemptible, paltry fool, and the best thing I can do is to tell Carry so.—Confound it, where the deuce did I get my temper from?”

The next day, Edgar made an apology to Carry, selecting a very good method of doing so.

Riding into Merton-Piggott, he went straight to the Assembly Rooms, and put his name down on the list of subscribers to the rector’s new schools—for no less a sum than forty guineas. That piece of business accomplished, he paid a visit to Gray Street, and having the good fortune again to find Carry alone in the drawing room, he spoke out at once on the subject nearest his heart.

"Carry," said the young man, "I couldn't sleep a wink all last night, and I shan't rest again till I have your forgiveness."

"You have done nothing, Edgar, for which you need ask *my* pardon," answered Carry with coldness, which she had never before shown him.

"Yes, I have. And I must ask your father's pardon too.—I gave him pain yesterday, but I hope I have done something that will please him to-day. I won thirty guineas on the race-course; and I have this morning put my name down for forty for the new schools."

"What, for the rector's schools, Edgar?" cried Carry, in a voice of a very different tone, as the crimson of joy shot into her cheek.

"Yes," said Edgar, "for the *rector's* schools, and I heartily wish he may do all the good with them he hopes. I haven't behaved well about him. So you see—'the fight' is over, and he is conqueror."

For half a minute Carry looked at him. Then she ran up to him, and as the tears came into her eyes rewarded him with a kiss.

"God bless you, Carry!" said the young man with emotion. "Most women would find it a hard task to manage me. But you wont. You can lead me wherever you will."

Very happy was the girl all that day. Very glad and proud she was when she told her father what Edgar had said and done; and very glad was John Bromhead when he heard the news, for he repeated to himself the words of a hope mentioned before—"It is as it should be! He loves her, even as I once loved his aunt. Such love will change him, and bring him over to her!"

Wherefore Carry had for a brief space longer peace of heart. Edgar had shown himself 'good,' and given her reason to believe that he would one day be 'religious' also. Encouraged to sympathize with him, and join as much 'as possible in all his pursuits which conscience told her were not wrong, she even began to long for the next Assembly Ball, when she would dance with him again, light-hearted and truthful as ever.

Readers must bear in mind that the incidents narrated in the last few pages occurred towards the close of September, 1821, whilst the fair (the appointed duration of which, it has been already said, was shorter than in the preceding year) was being held. To fit in with the alteration of the fair, the races had been fixed for a rather later date than in previous years.

Mr. Shakespeare Wylie was in the town again with his troop, but the old man had the mortification of seeing that the war between the new system and the old was being fast decided in favour of the former. The Magnums and a few friends attended his theatre once or twice, and the doctor had him to dinner at Bassingbourne House; but the attempt made in the preceding year to support the drama was not repeated. Carry kept to her resolution not to enter a theatre again, and Edgar Turrett appeared in 'the house' only twice.

On which two occasions, when Edgar, after the performance, went into the green-room to speak with the manager, the latter received him with a certain stiffness and embarrassment, which did not induce him to make his visits frequent. Indeed Edgar had half a suspicion that he had given the actor

offence, but he didn't trouble himself to think much, or inquire at all, about the matter. Of course a patron of the provincial stage could not condescend to such inquiry.

Still the young Squire wished to treat his old ally with all proper kindness.

When, therefore, after saying farewell to Carry, on the day after the races, he saw the manager in Abbey Place, he greeted him cordially.

"Barber has left the town, I suppose?" said Edgar.

"I don't know, Mr. Turrett," answered the actor curtly; "he has not been near me."

"What, haven't you seen Alec?"

"Yes, I saw him in the street—and walked away, so that he should not see me."

"Indeed! He rode my horse on the heath yesterday. I told you I would give him a helping hand."

A flush came to the manager's face, and with a return of his old cordiality and magniloquence he said, "My generous young patron, don't help the fellow out of love for me, or good-will to Christina. He shows her no love! Don't invite the poor old actor to pour forth the sorrows he had better keep to himself!—It's a mad world, and the sooner Shakespeare Wylie quits its troublesome stage, the more likely he'll be to have a round of applause on his retirement. God bless thee, my noble-hearted supporter! Believe me, what my lips can't say, is felt here!" (laying his right hand over his heart).

Having made which speech the manager hurried away, leaving Edgar not a little astonished and perplexed.

The effect of the manager's tone with regard to his

niece's husband was not to incline the young squire to a closer union with Alec Barber; but having considered the matter, and come to the conclusion that it merely indicated the existence of a family quarrel, Edgar of course did not feel himself bound to interfere in the domestic troubles of a King's Heath trainer and an aged tragedian. However, he mentioned to Carry the circumstances of this brief interview with Mr. Shakespeare Wylie.

"Therefore," said Edgar, concluding the account, "since my first and *chief* reason for helping the man was regard for Christina, I have no longer any strong motive for serving him."

"I am sure, Edgar," rejoined Carry firmly, "that you had better have as little as possible to do with him. I am sure he is a worthless man, and I pity his poor wife!"

So the young Squire, strengthened in his resolution to draw away from his discreditable ally, had little more to do with him until the end of the year, when circumstances (shortly to be narrated) brought them together again.

But of course he did not materially change his way of life.

Though he had told Carry that his fight with the rector was at an end, he did not intend to give up the amusements which were displeasing to Mr. Reeve, and the followers of that excellent clergyman. To such observers as Martha and Dr. Magnum the line of separation between him and Carry was as wide as ever; though for the moment John Bromhead and his child were led to hope that the heir of Castle Hollow would soon come to their way of thinking on serious matters.

Thus ran the days of Edgar Turrett till the last month of 1821 ;—the month when ‘ little Fan ’ died, and was laid in the tomb of the Bassingbournes.

CHAPTER V.

MR. ALEC BARBER APPLIES A SCREW.

BUT while Edgar was carrying out his determination to draw away from Alec Barber, that exemplary member of a lucky family was doing his best to render of no avail the good luck which had favoured his rascality for many months. Like all men of his class, he was fond of gambling. So fortunate had he been with cards and dice at various periods of his career, that had he laid by his winnings, as a prudent dealer amasses the profits of trade, instead of occupying a wretched strip of marsh land, he might have been one of the chief agriculturists of the 'light lands,'—where it has long been the boast of the wealthiest farmers that they are 'The Farmer Princes' of the country.

Caution and prudent thrift, however, were out of Alec Barber's line. As soon as he got £500 into his hands, he always tried to make it £5,000 by a great *coup*. Schemes for achieving sudden wealth, through the secret transactions of the turf, or the yet darker operations of mining speculation, had more than

once reduced him to insolvency. And even at times when his exchequer was so low that he could not make large ventures,—at times when he was glad to pick up guineas from the squires, and crown pieces from the farmers of the ‘corn country’—he always had gold in his pocket for high play.

Elated with the success of the first nine months of 1821, flush with ready money, and borne on with the belief that in his recent discoveries he possessed a mine of wealth, whenever (as he expressed it) he liked to “*put the screw* on the young Squire or John Braddock,” Alec Barber had plunged into gambling of divers kinds. He had joined with certain enterprising capitalists of the city of London ‘and elsewhere,’ who were starting a new coal company. He was buying horses on commission for the King’s cavalry. Together with some of his King’s Heath friends, he had organized a system of betting agency by which he vowed he would ‘beggar up all creation.’ He had a pair of colts in hand for the first King’s Heath meeting of 1822; and in hours of relaxation he was amusing himself with cards and dice,—playing for stakes which would have alarmed men of good landed estate. The ‘knowing ones’ of the more blackguard cliques attached to King’s Heath, knew that he was concerned in business at divers places, and under various names,—as Richard Sharp, Samuel Miles, William Dovetail. The ‘knowing ones,’ however, could not see what Alec’s little game was,—where his funds came from, who were his secret supporters, how long he might be able to keep the ball rolling—whether he was using, or was merely used by, other rogues. The ‘knowing ones’ were convinced that, sooner or later, Alec must be ‘smashed;’ but the question was when ‘the smash’ would come.

Indeed Alec Barber was going 'the pace' faster than even he himself was aware.

In the December of 1821, however (certain little matters having 'gone wrong,' and luck, strange to say, having deserted her votary, who had resolved never to do any 'bit of business' which was altogether 'on the square') Mr. Alexander Barber, farmer, Little Deane, near East-haven, found himself in a position of much embarrassment. To meet a discounters's 'little bill' he had to transfer to another owner the colts, by which he had 'laid to make a pot' at the ensuing Spring meetings; and to carry on the war he had to look about him for the sinews of strife. An unaccountable alarm had seized the many money-lenders of his acquaintance, not one of whom would advance him, at any rate of interest whatever, even so contemptible a sum as £20. A suspicion seized Alec that some enemy was at work, undermining his credit;—and truth to tell, he was not wrong in this suspicion!

Had it [not been for a secret known to very few persons then living, and still only guessed at by the readers of this history, 'the smash' of Alec Barber's fortunes would have come much sooner than the 'knowing ones' anticipated.

"Skin you purple, Alec," observed Mr. Barber to himself, "what a run of devil's own ill-luck you have had during the last three months! Something has gone wrong with you! What is it? Hang me! if you mustn't draw on one of your sleeping partners—Messrs. Edgar Turrett and John Braddock. Now which of them will you have at first? Let's see! If you put the screw on John Braddock just now, you'll kill him outright. He can't give you the money you want, without selling his entire stock—and then where'd

be the goose with the golden eggs? Cooked and done for, that's how he'd be! No, Alec; you must put the screw on the young Squire;—gently, gently at first. You'd have done better to leave him for a short while longer. But you can't help yourself. Like more fortunate heroes, Alec, you can't absolutely govern circumstances, but can only make the best of them. Then, Alec, have at the young Squire!"

Saying which, Alec Barber took pen in hand and wrote the following note:—

"DEAR SIR,

"Affairs having gone very much off the even with me for the last three months, I am in such cruel want of the ready that, if I can't raise a thousand pounds without delay, I shall be utterly ruined. Knowing your readiness to help a true and honest man in the hour of need, I hope you'll stand my friend, and lend me the sum above-mentioned.

"A line directed to me at the Blue Boar, Wisbeach, will reach me. As time is short, I trust you won't delay to answer this.

"I beg, sir, to remain,

"Your most respectful servant,

"ALEC BARBER.

"Edgar Turrett, Esq.,

"Hollow House, Castle Hollow."

"There," said Alec, laying down his pen, and reviewing his work with approval, "that's not so bad! That's neat, concise, elegant! Oh, Alec, Alec! what a turn you have for literature!—if only you didn't happen to have been born a gentleman. Turn of the screw No. 1. If that doesn't make Edgar Turrett,

of the Hollow House, Castle Hollow, open his eyes—I am blest! But what will he say to turn of the screw No. 2?—what to turn of the screw No. 3?—Skin me purple, if I don't make him howl before I have done with him!"

Unquestionably turn No. 1 did make Edgar Turrett open his eyes with astonishment. It even put him into a lively rage with what he was pleased to call the 'blackguard's immeasurable impudence.'

For several days past the young Squire had been unusually depressed in spirits.

Week by week Adelaide Turrett had become more thin and feeble, wasting away before his eyes; and Dr. Magnum had just told him that, though she might live through the winter, she could scarcely be expected to outlive the spring. Her decline could no longer be kept a secret from the blind Squire, for it was apparent in her changed voice, as well as in her wasted face and sunken eyes. It had, therefore, been broken to her father, that the precarious state of her health made it more than probable that she would precede him to the grave.

Greatly to the relief of Edgar and his aunt, the intelligence disturbed the old man less than was anticipated. Throughout the summer and autumn he had been gradually losing vitality;—manifesting daily less and less interest in the affairs of his estate, his garden, and his household. His failing energies were silently concentrating on two great thoughts—the thought of approaching death, and the thought of the secret which he had been so long *living* down, was soon to *have lived* down. When the real state of his child was communicated to him, after the first few minutes he manifested only little disturbance; and in the even-

ing of the same day he was able to allude to the subject with calmness.

"Adelaide," he said, in a low voice, when he and his daughter were sitting together without other companion, "we shall live it down."

"By God's help, dear father," she said, taking his hand.

"There is so little time now," he continued eagerly, "to accomplish our purpose. When we are in the grave no one can discover it."

"And when we have lived it down, dear father," returned Adelaide softly, "we shall live on, through dear Christ's help,—for ever and ever, in happiness."

"Amen!" said the aged man, raising his hand to his blind eyes.

It may therefore be easily imagined that Edgar was in no mood to reply without irritation to Alec Barber's astounding request.

Taking pen he wrote the following curt reply to the letter:—

"I am astonished at your unreasonable petition, and of course decline to give you any pecuniary help whatever.

"EDGAR TURRETT."

"Hollow House, Castle Hollow."

"Exactly," said Alec Barber, when he read this concise and not courteous answer; "I told you, Alec, that the screw, turn No. 1., would make him open his eyes. I wonder what he'll say to turn No. 2 of our interesting machine, eh, Alec? I hear his aunt is getting worse. That's in our favour. Don't you see, Alec, you lucky dog? He wont like to let her know what's up, when he hears all. So now then for turn No. 2!"

Whilst he said this, Alec Barber was sitting alone in the private parlour of the 'Blue Boar,' Wisbeach, with writing materials before him; and as he uttered the words, he took up his pen and wrote thus—

"DEAR SIR,

"I do not wonder at your surprise, which will cease and give place to another and altogether bigger sort of astonishment when you see me. On reflection, I find out that £1,000 would not suit my turn. I must have much more; and I am quite sure that, when you hear what I have to communicate to you, you will be only too happy to stump up for the sake of keeping me quiet. Meet me the day after to-morrow at two o'clock P.M., at the Gedgrave 'Horseshoes,' and *hear what I have to tell you*. If then you still think my request unreasonable, it will quite suit Alec Barber's book to be taken for a Dutchman for the rest of his natural days.

"If you don't meet me at the Gedgrave 'Horseshoes,' I shall come straight on to Castle Hollow, and make my little communication to your grandfather and Miss Turrett, who I have no doubt will make handsome terms with me. If I can't get at either you or them by any other means, I'll cover you with confusion by publishing my little bit of intelligence to the whole 'light lands,' and that'll kill all three of you; for you are as proud as Satan. So you'd better meet me.

"Alec Barber is not a man who sticks at a trifle.

"I beg, sir, to remain,

"Your most respectful servant,

"ALEC BARBER."

"Edgar Turrett, Esq.,

"Hollow House, Castle Hollow."

"There," said the writer, when he had corrected this characteristic letter, "that'll do for turn No. 2 of the screw. You have gone a step or two the wrong side of law, Master Alec, in that turn perhaps, but your position is so strong, that you may do what you like. He'll come fast enough. Skin me purple, Alec, how he will howl! Ah! but our screw has got a few more turns yet, Alec,—just a few, old boy! And now, Alec, we'll refresh ourselves with a good stiff glass of Hollands, hot, with ;—haigh! landlady, Alexander Barber, Esquire, of Little Deane, near Easthaven, wants you."

Alec was not less right in predicting the effect of turn No. 2, than he had been in foretelling the immediate consequences of turn No 1.

Edgar was walking by himself in the Castle Hollow garden, when 'old Tom' brought him the post-bag to unlock. The bag contained 'Bell's Life,' and other newspapers, as well as this letter.

"That will do, Tom," said the young Squire, putting the papers in the pockets of his shooting-jacket, as he opened the letter; "tell my grandfather and aunt the bag has nothing for them."

"Now, then," he added, when 'old Tom' was beyond earshot, "here's that fellow's hand-writing again.—Let's see what he says.

Ere Edgar had completed his first perusal of the letter, he turned white with anger; and if he did not literally howl under the application of screw No. 2, he uttered a succession of violent expressions, which would shock the eyes of ladies, if they were put upon this page.

"The day after to-morrow, at two o'clock!" exclaimed the young Squire. "Why, that's this very

day. To be sure, it's two days post from Wisbeach. Meet him ! I'll meet him with a vengeance,—he wont like to meet me again.—He shall smart for his insolence !”

In less than an hour Edgar was on Black Baron's back ; and it was noteworthy that he had his hunting-whip in his hand, though he was not dressed for the hunting field. It was his wont to ride with spurs only, and no whip, when he was not bound for hunt, or taking part in race.

“The scoundrel shall howl for mercy !” muttered the young Squire, as he cantered over Castle Hollow. “I'll double-thong him till he is half dead.—Haigh ! Baron, get along with you !”

Having given full play to the ‘rough side’ of his nature during the first half of the way to Gedgrave, Edgar became calmer—and during the second half of the journey took counsel with prudence. The result of which conference with the power who has more to do with the making of heroes than many people imagine, was that the young man decided to keep the control of his indignation until he had heard all that Alec Barber had to communicate, and then to thrash him—as never dog was flogged.

It was but half-past one when Edgar rode up to the Gedgrave ‘Horseshoes,’ but as he entered the inn yard, he saw Alec Barber at a window, nodding to him with unruffled effrontery. In another minute he stood in the private room, where Alec had just finished a mid-day dinner.

“Glad to see you, Squire,” said Alec, greeting his visitor with a successful assumption of ease, “very glad to see you. You're half an hour before your time. Very kind of you to be over-punctual. Things are always better over-done than under-done. The beef-

steak I have been having was neither one nor t'other."

"You seemed to have so much to say to me, I thought it best to be in good time."

"Thank you, Squire."

"Now,—what is it?" inquired Edgar, putting his hat and whip on a side-table, and sitting down.

"Just what I said, Squire.—I am as near smash as a pretty piece of china can be, and I want you to put me safe."

"To that proposition I have already made my answer."

"Exactly. You did make an answer,—and what's more, just about the answer I should have given, if I had been in your shoes,—knowing, of course, no more of the cards than you do at this present moment."

"Well?"

"But I am here to-day, Squire, to see if I can't make you change your mind;—and you have come here to show me that you wont change your mind."

As he said this carelessly, Alec drank off the last sip of a tumbler of rum and water, passed his fingers through his hair, pulled his whiskers once and again, and then looked the young Squire full in the face with an impudent and defiant smile.

"Now, Squire, we are in for a tussle. You are determined not to give me any money, and I am determined that you shall. It's a fair fight; and as I don't like to go in for any sort of fight, without having a bet upon it, I'll give you two to one in fivers that you give in.—Come, will you take me?"

If I did, I should lessen your chance of success.—

Come, man, no fooling ! I am here. Tell me what you have to say.—Speak now, if you wish to speak.”

As Edgar spoke, he rose. Whereupon Alec Barber rose also, not caring to remain seated at an interview which, he was well aware, might at any moment be enlivened by a display of physical force on the part of his opponent.

“Now, Squire, if I were to tell you that I am the holder of a secret which has come to me by the exercise of some of that sagacity of which I am rather proud,—and by my customary good luck, of which I am a good deal prouder ; and if I were to tell you that this secret, were I to divulge it, would sink you in shame, and make you glad to fly the country, or run straight to the devil, to get beyond the scorn of the ‘light land’ gentry ;—if I were to tell you this, what would you say ?”

“That you lied,” was Edgar’s blunt reply.

“Now, Squire, suppose yourself to have made that answer ; and suppose me, like the meek Christian that I am, to have taken no offence. When you’ve supposed all that, it will be my turn to play another card. Are you ready for it ?”

“Quite.”

“Then, listen to me, Squire ; for I am now going to fling away ‘if’ and ‘were,’ and tell you about ‘what is.’”

The man paused, stroking his whiskers, and endeavouring to fix Edgar’s eye.

“Go on,” Edgar said hoarsely. “Be quick. Don’t try to catch my eye. You’d better not ; for by—, if I catch yours, I shall knock you down where you stand.”

“Thank you for the hint, Mr. Turrett. Then I’ll be quick.”

"You'd better," said Edgar, looking on the ground, and resolving to control himself for a few minutes longer.

"I have a taste for grubbing up old secrets, particularly when special pains have been taken to bury them. It so happens, Mr. Turrett, that I have found out a terrible secret,—affecting you, and your aunt, and your grandfather ! I don't know which of you it concerns most. It's a *terrible* secret,—an *awful* secret, and that is the fact of it !—It refers to a crime perpetrated more than twenty-eight years ago by one of your own blood, under circumstances which, fortunately for your grandfather and aunt, rendered it possible for them to conceal from the world how nearly it affected them. What the crime was, and who the felon was, I won't tell you yet. It's enough for the present to say that the crime was a capital offence, and that the felon was one of your own family ; that it was committed in London, shortly before you were born,—and that the shame of it belongs to you and yours,—as much as to any member of your family. That's enough for the present of the crime ;—let me now speak of its concealment."

The man paused.

Although Edgar had warned him that if their eyes met they would come to blows, and though Alec by no means wished personal violence to be a feature of the contest, the knave was dissatisfied because he could not catch Edgar's eye. The rascal had a keen, searching, telling eye ; and knowing its power, he was uneasy because he could not bring it to bear in the encounter. In other desperate crises of strife he had used it with effect, and he felt himself deprived of his best weapon, now that he was not permitted to use it. But Edgar resolutely looked away from it ; not because he dreaded its glance, but because he feared the tumult of his own heart.

“Well,” he said,—“its concealment?”

“As it was perpetrated in London,” continued Alec, “it never was known down here in the ‘light lands,’—or at least, no one here in the ‘light lands’ ever imagined how its shame belonged to the Turretts of Castle Hollow. About that same time, your grandfather came into the estate on the death of his brother, and soon afterwards you came into the world, for him to take care of. Determining to hide their shame from the world and bury it in their hearts, as was natural for proud people, your grandfather and his daughter came down to the Hollow House; and there they have lived ever since, nursing their secret, and hoping to carry it to their graves with them,—ay, Squire, to their graves,—from which, if report speak true, they can neither of them be far distant. They have never breathed the name of that felon to you. He has never been mentioned to you, as one of the family of which you are so proud. You have been brought up in ignorance of the crime and the man who committed it; but I can enlighten you, and all the world besides, if I like! Now, Squire, am I worth buying? Gad, Mr. Turrett, my secret alone is worth six times the sum that I asked you to lend me,—and my silence twelve times. Say, Squire, how would you like me to go to the old man and his daughter, and kill them outright by saying—‘The secret you have been all this time living down has escaped into my hands, and I’ll blurt it out to all creation, so that clean folks may shun your boy as if he’d got the mange.’ Ay, Squire?—Or think you, Squire, how you would like, whenever your name is mentioned, to have the gentry of the ‘light lands’ say—‘Ay—Turrett—one of the Turrett family was a felon!’ That would be bad, I guess. But bad as it is, Squire, you haven’t heard the

worst!—Come, won't you take two to one I get the money from you now?"

"What is the worst? What is the worst? Who was this—this—?"

"Ay," interrupted Alec, with a sneer, "you can't say the word. But, by heavens, if you don't deal generously by me, you'll hear it ring in your ears pretty often! Who was he? Well,—I won't hurt your feelings by telling you with my own lips. I have scratched down here on this paper a bill of facts—a few plain statements—and to each plain statement I have affixed a few plain remarks, so that you may ascertain for yourself the exact nature and truth of my secret. There—Alec is a considerate, delicate-minded fellow,—take it, and look at it. There ain't much of it; and it is as legible as pen and ink can make it."

As he thus spoke, the clever scoundrel extended a sheet of letter-paper to Edgar, who clutched it,—without looking at the face of the man who presented it to him,—and in a second was running his eye over "A few Plain Statements About the Family of Turrett, of the Hollow House, Castle Hollow."

And as Edgar read the paper, Alec Barber stood watching him with malicious, insolent triumph in his face.

That leer of exultant scorn cost Alec Barber dear.

For, whilst he was turning over the sheet of paper, the young Squire, forgetting his caution, looked away from the 'plain statements' for an instant, and saw the grin of brutal satisfaction in the rascal's face.

At last their eyes had met.

In an instant a legion of fierce devils took possession of Edgar's heart.

One sudden step, and a menacing movement

with his right arm, he made in the direction of his enemy.

As quickly Alec Barber sprung into 'position,'—making guard against the coming blow.

It was the worst thing he could have done.

Had he remained quiet, without assuming a pugilistic attitude,—even in that moment of fierce emotion, Edgar would have recovered his self-control. But restraint was no longer possible.

Quick as a flash of lightning he struck two blows; a downwards blow with his right, that broke Alec's guard, making his arm drop as powerless as though it had been no more than a chicken's drum-stick, instead of a limb close packed with thews of iron hardness;—and then a blow put in with the left, straight into the mouth, irresistible as the stroke of a steam-ram. In less time than it has taken the reader's eye to pass along one of these lines, the man was sent flat to the ground, and his bleeding face was lying in a corner of the room.

The broad, thick shoulders and finely-developed arms of the young Squire had done prompt execution.

In an instant Alec Barber discovered (what he had never before suspected) that in strength Edgar was greatly his superior. But the man lacked neither pluck nor ferocity. Nimble as a cat, and with a tiger's glare in his eye, he sprang to his feet, and throwing aside a chair (which had been upset by his fall) rushed upon his antagonist and closed with him. In less than a minute they were both rolling on the floor,—struggling for the mastery, as two wild beasts of equal courage might struggle.

There was no noise of words. Breath was of too much value to be used in shouting or oaths. But the

commotion was heard in adjoining apartments ; in the landlady's parlour and the public sitting-room. Two strong and enraged men could not so contend without noise. The table at which Alec Barber had been dining was upset with a crash, just as Edgar succeeded in getting the upper hand of his adversary ; depriving him of the temporary use of his arms, lifting him bodily from the floor, and then flinging him back to it with a thundering thud.

Just as Alec Barber so fell, for the second time, the door of the room was opened,—and Mr. Stephen Dowse came upon the scene, followed by the landlady.

“ Bless my soul, gentlemen ! ” exclaimed Stephen Dowse, “ what are you after ? For heaven's sake, don't murder one another ! Think of Mrs. Barton, gentlemen ; think of ' the house ;—' think of *me* ! What is it about, gentlemen ? ”

Alec was the first to reply.

He knew the bank-agent well by sight ; knew, also, that the bank-agent was more familiar with his money involvements than any one else in the neighbourhood of Merton-Piggott.

“ Oh, nothing,” said the man, picking himself up, with a ghastly smile on his white face, down which a line of crimson ran ; “ nothing is the matter ; it's only a friendly trial of strength.”

“ 'Pon my honour ! ” said Stephen, “ it's a queer way of proving the strength of your friendship ! ”

“ It's a lie, sir ! ” shrieked Edgar, fiercely. “ The fellow *lies*. He's a rascal, and—I have thrashed him.”

Half a minute's pause,—during which Alec and Edgar looked at each other significantly, Stephen Dowse turned his prying eyes round the room, and Mrs.

Barton found an opportunity to ejaculate, "Oh, what a thing for the house!—and Barton away from home!"

"Mr. Turrett," observed Alec, in a voice of perfect self-possession, "if you don't wish Mr. Dowse to see what is on that paper, you'd better put it in your pocket.—Of course, it's no affair of mine."

In an instant Edgar was recalled to his senses by these words, and prudence once more was whispering in his ear. He saw the necessity of keeping the bank-agent in ignorance as to the cause of the dispute. He saw how completely the happiness of his beloved grandfather, and that grandfather's daughter, depended on his caution, his forgetfulness of mere self, his submission (for a time—only for a short time) to the knave who had arrived at the fearful secret which they (gentle, unselfish souls!) had out of love for him spent so many years in living down in secret.

Picking up the paper, and thrusting it into his pocket, Edgar turned to the bank-agent, and after regarding him for a brief space with a countenance of painful embarrassment said, "You will consult best for Miss Bromhead's feelings, as well as for mine, if you decide not to talk about what you have just witnessed. A quarrel of any kind brings a certain amount of disrepute on those who are mixed up with it. So you'll oblige me, sir, by keeping silence on the subject.—Ere long you shall know more."

"My dear Mr. Turrett," returned Stephen Dowse, "you may rely on my secrecy. Stephen Dowse is by nature a close man—a *close* man, Mr. Turrett. If he hadn't been a close man, Mr. Turrett, he would not be where he is now."

"Then, good morning, sir. Accept my thanks for

your assurance ; and if you see your cousins at Merton-Piggott, be good enough to present them with my respects."

"Certainly," returned Mr. Dowse. "I don't doubt that Miss Carry is not in the best spirits to-day, for Dr. Magnum's little child (a great pet of hers) died last night."

"Indeed !" replied Edgar, scarce knowing what the bank-agent said. "Mrs. Barton, good morning."

Leaving the room thus abruptly, Edgar went to the stables of the inn, and in another minute was riding back to Castle Hollow.

As he turned into the garden of the Hollow House, he remembered that he had left his hunting-whip at the 'Horseshoes ;'—remembered, also, that he had not double-thonged Alec Barber.

"So-ho," observed Stephen Dowse to himself, as an hour later he continued his journey—in a heavy gig, drawn by a heavy horse—to a distant town of the 'light lands,' where he had to inspect the accounts of an outlying agency of Crabtree, Scuttle, and Co.'s house, "that's the game, is it ! Alec Barber has got the young Squire in his grip ; and Edgar Turrett, Esquire, is writhing under it !—Ay, I said I'd find the young Squire out, and, by the living Jingo, haven't I found him out ? In wits Alec Barber is too many for him ; but the man is playing a desperate game, though I don't yet see all the moves of it. One of these days, though, I will see them. A nice mess he has made of himself, has the young Squire. Good family, nice estate, college education, rich girl who has promised to be his wife—what materials for a failure in life ! Oh ! he's a regular bad 'un, and no mistake ! Stript his poor aunt of every penny she had ! No wonder the poor creature gets

worse every day !—But Master Alec had better take care of what he is doing. Men like young Turrett are not to be trifled with. I declare, I shouldn't be surprised to hear, one of these fine days, that the young Squire had murdered the fellow. But that wont come yet. Still, if he has got the young Squire in his grip, Forrester, of King's Heath, may safely accommodate Master Alec a little further, and I'll tell him so. I wonder what was on that paper. The young Squire took precious good care that I shouldn't see it. Never mind ! Stephen Dowse, sooner or later, will know its contents.—Of course, I shall tell Forrester not to advance Barber much until he knows the exact state of the case between the two scoundrels."

Alec too had his reflections on the morning's occurrences, as he drove in his spidery gig towards King's Heath,

" Good !" said Alec, " No. 2 turn of the screw has worked well. It was stormy weather whilst it was being put in ; but it's done ; and, as for his blows, he shall pay for them ;—they shall be put down in the account !—He's got the ' plain statements ' for half an hour's quiet reading, and I'll give him a week to go up to London, and inspect the proofs of them. Then I'll come down upon him again. Yes ; a week will be liberal time. By Jove, Alec, you dog, you'll be in clover again, before ten days are over ! But you wont leave Little Deane yet awhile ! It's such a snug ' little place,' and it suits Mrs. Alec's constitution so sweetly. I can't make her out, by the way, Alec.—She says she is something better ;—and there's no doubt about it her spirits are higher ; there's no doubt about that. But that ' little place ' *must* do for her in time. Gad ! how nimbly the young Squire picked up the ' plain statements,' when he saw Mr. Dowse peering about them !"

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRICE OF SILENCE.

THE first object that attracted the young Squire's attention, as he walked from the Hollow House stables to the hall door, was the form of Adelaide Turrett lying upon the sofa before the drawing-room fire. She was visible to him through the window; and as he watched her from the garden, a flood of tender emotion rolled over him, and the tears came to his eyes. "Oh, merciful God," he said, "help me to keep it from her knowledge that she hasn't lived her secret down." How unutterably thankful was he, when he murmured these words, that he could reflect on his conduct towards her, from childhood upwards, without being able to remember a single passage in which he had borne himself to her otherwise than considerately, dutifully, affectionately, tenderly. The long years of her gentle devotion rose before him—that gentle devotion of womanly love which had been so unvarying and deep, that it had often perplexed him when he had sought for the reason why she was to him so unlike what maiden aunts are to brothers' children. In hours of grief and weakness,

memory comes either as an avenger or a comforter. To Edgar, even in that terrible hour, she was the latter. How sweet and strengthening was the recollection that throughout his life, though ignorant of the tie that bound her so strongly to him, and ignorant of the dreadful mystery of her existence, he had ever loved her as—a mother.

With quiet steps, he went to the library, where he found the Squire extended on his sofa, sound asleep. Placid as a child's was the old man's countenance; and, as Edgar looked upon the signs of age that covered it, he had never before loved the old man as he did then. Never before! But even then the wish was close to his heart, that the time might not be far distant when such sleep would be replaced by rest, more tranquil, more beautiful, more enduring!—Would death mercifully take them both while they still were happy in the thought that their fearful secret was their own? or would their days—the days of the good old man and his gentle daughter—be prolonged until they discovered that their brave endurance had been all in vain, that their pious artifice had been defeated, that the shame of their 'house' was on the world's tongue, that 'their boy,' covered with ignominy, was a mark for the scorn of the scornful?

God avert that woe; and chastise a young man's pride with any other rod but that!

Such was Edgar's prayer.

Leaving the library, without rousing the Squire from his slumber, Edgar closed the door behind him, and noiselessly entered the drawing-room.

Adelaide Turrett was not asleep.

"I did not wake you?" he asked, taking a seat by her side, and raising her hand to his lips.

"No, darling," Adelaide replied, "I was only pretending to be asleep when you were at the window just now. I knew you were there."

"But your eyes were closed!"

"Were they?—then I felt you."

"You look better to-day, dear Aunt!"

"I am comfortable, dear boy, quite comfortable; but you—you look very sad!"

"Dear, dear aunt," replied the young Squire, doing his best to keep his emotion to himself, "how can I be otherwise than sad?—I try not to let you see it."

"Poor fellow! poor fellow!" said the dying lady tenderly, stroking his hair with her thin hand, "Of course, you must be sad. You see your old happy home breaking up."

"Oh, aunt!" sobbed the young man, unable to maintain his calmness, "it has been such a happy one!—You have made it so.—Dear, dear aunt, my heart says it;—you have made it so."

"To know that, Edgar, is the best medicine for me now, next to God's word."

Gentle and, for others, thoughtful to the last, this angel of a quiet country home was ever thinking how she could mitigate the sorrows which she saw her death would occasion.

"My boy," she said softly, "this home has been even happier to me than to you, and it would have been a very sad one to me if you had not been all you have been.—Remember this when I am away; and, darling—don't be over-downcast. A short time—wait a short time patiently, and you'll have a still happier home in the old house. Oh, Edgar, my name, my memory, will live in it."

Late on the evening of that day (when Adelaide and

her father had retired to rest), Edgar Turrett left home, and, taking the night-mail, went up to town.

He was absent from Castle Hollow less than seventy-two hours; but in that short space of time he had satisfied himself of the truth of Alec Barber's revelations; and, as he made the journey down to the 'light lands,' on the roof of the mail, he decided what course he ought to pursue.

One part of his decision will be best shown by putting an important legal paper before the reader.

Within a few days of his return from town, Edgar experienced a gentle quarter-turn of Alec Barber's screw, in the form of the following note:—

"Little Deane, Easthaven.

"SIR,

"As you have now had time to reflect on the plain statements,' and decide what measures to take in consequence, I shall be happy to hear from you forthwith. I want a thousand pounds ready to the nail, £6,000 secured on the death of your grandfather, and an annuity of £300 per annum till the £6,000 is paid. I must say I think mine is a moderate demand, considering all my services to you. Give me this in repayment of past services, and you'll find me,

"Yours to serve,

"ALEC BARBER."

"P.S.—Write and tell me where you'll meet me. The 'Green Dragon,' Sedgehassock, would suit me uncommonly well."

In consequence of this additional touch of the screw handle, Edgar Turrett went over to Sedgehassock,

procured a loan of a thousand pounds from a money-lender (who had previously advanced him a considerable sum), and having met Alec Barber at the 'Green Dragon' gave him the money, together with the bond transcribed beneath—

“ Know all men by these presents, that I, Edgar Antony Turrett, of the Hollow House, Castle Hollow, in the County of ———, am held and firmly bound to Alexander Barber, of Little Deane, near Easthaven, in the County of ———, in the sum of twelve thousand pounds of lawful British money, to be paid to the said Alexander Barber, or to his certain attorney, executors, administrators, or assigns, for which payment, to be well and truly made, I bind myself, my heirs, executors, and administrators, and every of them firmly by these presents. Sealed with my seal, dated this day of January, 1822.

The condition of the above written bond or obligation is such that if the above bounden Edgar Antony Turrett, his heirs, executors, or administrators, should during the life-time of Antony Turrett, of the Hollow House, Castle Hollow, in the County of ——— Esquire, grandfather of the said Edgar Antony Turrett, pay unto the said Alexander Barber the annual sum of three hundred pounds, of lawful British money, without any deduction whatsoever, and should also, within six calendar months after the decease of the said Antony Turrett, pay unto the said

Alexander Barber, his executors, or administrators, the sum of six thousand pounds sterling, or in case the said Edgar Antony Turrett should happen to depart this life in the life-time of the said Antony Turrett, or in case the said Alexander Barber should predecease the said Edgar Antony Turrett in the life-time of the said Antony Turrett, or should assign or attempt to assign these presents, or do or suffer any act whereby the same may become vested in any other person, or should, during the lifetime of the said Antony Turrett, either verbally or by writing, communicate to any person or persons whomsoever the fact of the execution of these presents by the said Edgar Antony Turrett, or should do or suffer any act whereby the same may come to the knowledge of any person or persons whomsoever—Then the above written obligation shall be void, or else shall remain in full force and virtue.

“EDGAR ANTONY TURRETT.”

L. S.

Signed and sealed
in the presence of

The sole motive that induced Edgar to give Alexander Barber this post-obit bond was strong love for his aged grandfather, and that grandfather's daughter. That he might shield them from a discovery which would kill them at a blow, he made this bargain with a rogue, buying his silence for a time with £1,000

sterling, and the above bond for £6,000, and an annuity of £300.

He knew that he had only bought the man's secrecy for a time ; but it was only for a short time he required the silence, and for it he paid the above-mentioned consideration.

That Alexander Barber would hereafter endeavour to extract more money from him, as the price of silence, Edgar was satisfied. In the 'hereafter,' however, the young Squire could take care of himself, without conceding to the demands of the rascal ; in the 'present' he had to take care of his grandfather and Miss Turrett. He had therefore given the dog a sufficient sop to keep him from barking for a short space : £1,000 sterling, an annuity of £300, and the prospect of £6,000 at no very distant date. The wording of the bond shows the attentive reader what precautions Edgar took to achieve secrecy, as far as his grandfather was concerned, and to hold power over the man to whom he was for the moment yielding. Not a word was introduced into the bond from which any third person could gain a clue to the 'secret.' The contents of the bond itself were to be known only to the young Squire and Alec, the disclosure thereof by the latter rendering the instrument invalid. In case Alexander Barber predeceased the young Squire, in the lifetime of the old Squire, the obligation was void ; which condition was inserted to the end that, in case of such death, Alexander Barber's representatives might see that the instrument had become worthless, and therefore might have no motive, beyond passing curiosity, for troubling themselves about it. In case, also, the young Squire predeceased his grandfather it was void, whereby (under the possible contingency that Alec

Barber, dying shortly after Edgar, should also predecease the old Squire) the existence of the mere bond would give the scoundrel's representatives no claim on his (Edgar's) representatives; whereby, also, the young Squire had power over his adversary, so that he could by *his own act* nullify the obligation.

In his interview with Alec Barber, at the Green Dragon, Sedgehassock (when the bond was given to Alec), Edgar indulged in few words, and not in a single expression of temper. His last words to Alec were, "Now I have bought your silence with the uttermost farthing that I can command until my grandfather's death. Thus far you have triumphed over me. But remember, if that bond is shown to any one it becomes void. *Remember this also*,—if you do not leave me alone until my grandfather's death, you'll drive me to a last desperate course, by which (unable to protect the Squire, and relinquishing all attempt to do so) I shall predecease you, and instead of getting more money from me, you'll find this bond of no effect whatever."

Having said which, Edgar Turrett turned upon his heel, and with a heavy heart and deep gloom took his way back to Castle Hollow.

And, left to himself, Alec Barber, with a grin of exultation, observed, "Just as I thought, Alec!—I always knew that when he came to the conclusion that it was best to buy us off he'd do it quiet enough—ay, with all the quiet pride of a cursed aristocrat—and without haggling, too, about the amount. Leave him alone till the old man's death? Yes, I shall do that, Alec. Yes, my boy, it's our interest to do that; for in the first place we have wrung him, for the present, as dry as an aired shirt; and, in the second place, he's just the customer to spite us, by killing himself in

some crafty fashion, and so diddle us out of our bond. So now, Alec, we are in funds again, and must play a cautious but bold game. Yes, Alec, a bold game; for luck favours only the bold."

On his homeward journey to Hollow House, Edgar Turrett, upon the roof of the coach which conveyed him from Sedgehassock to Merton-Piggott, sitting with the collar of his great overcoat pulled up round his ears, and a thick muffler wrapped round his neck, looked the stern future in the face, and made resolutions (not in all respects wise ones) for meeting it. Throughout the journey, the rain of a wet, cold, raw, stormy January pelted down upon him, and a keen wind, howling dismally, beat against him—and then passed with wail, and cry, and moan over the wolds, and downs, and levels of the 'light lands.' There were other outside passengers, and they descended from the roof at every inn whereat the coach stopped to change horses, and armed themselves against the hurricane with hot brandy-and-water. But the young Squire needed no such support. Gazing into the stern future, he was unconscious of the storm.

As the coach neared Merton-Piggott, his plans had taken definite shape.

He would return to Castle Hollow, and remain there, soothing the last hours of his grandfather and Adelaide, whom he had never before loved as he then did. He would tend upon them with the full devotion of reverential affection, close their eyes, and lay them in the grave by the side of the Turretts of old days. They should die happy in the belief that they had lived their secret down. That done, he would pay Alec Barber the full stipulated

price of his silence, and then he would part with the old house and estate, to which the curse of a terrible secret was attached; and leaving his native country—with a new name (pure of shame) would seek a new land, where he might live the secret down with greater success than had followed the long, unselfish, noble effort of his grandfather and Adelaide Turrett.

But how about Carry Bromhead? What part was assigned to her in the drama of the stern future?

Edgar had determined that he would never marry.

As a man of honour, he deemed that he could not marry any woman without telling her of what he termed his degradation and utter ignominy; and that secret he would never voluntarily impart to man or woman. Moreover, the bare thought of perpetuating that 'utter ignominy' made him shudder with horror. How could he, with heart of human sympathy beating in his breast, beget offspring who—by some strange chances, strange as those which had revealed Adelaide Turrett's secret to Alec Barber—might live to discover the shame of their lineage? No, he would live his secret down alone,—quite, quite alone,—and then there would be an end of it!

With sad, stern satisfaction, he reflected how he could without difficulty persuade Carry that he was unworthy of her, and that it would be wickedness in her to become his wife. He saw clearly the effect that 'little Fan's' recent death was working in her, and foresaw too, how every succeeding day would increase that effect. More and more her thoughts would be taken from worldly, and more and more set on heavenly things. It only remained for him to appear more

earnest in the pursuit of earthly pleasure, and more resolute to lead a godless life; and the gentle girl—whom he loved with all his heart, and soul, and strength—would say to him, “Edgar, we must part; I dare not be yours.”

Then he would obediently accept her dismissal, and go away,—and live his secret down.

It has already been said that his resolutions were not, in all respects, wise.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DOWNWARD SLOPE.

AT Merton-Piggott and Castle Hollow a mournful ending to the old year; and a yet sadder opening to the new.

During the January of 1822, Edgar saw but little of Carry; and that little was enough to satisfy him that the poor girl was at length fully aware of the existence of the wide gulf that lay between himself and her, over whose turbulent waters he *would* not come to her, and she *dared* not cross to him. Spending her nights in tears and prayers, passing several hours of each day in solemn communion with Fanny Magnum, Carry looked with abhorrence on her past career of thoughtless innocence; speaking of it with unjust self-accusations, resolving that the future should in no way resemble it.

Of course, in that month there were few occasions on which her views and Edgar's could come into direct collision. While she, wearing the black dress of sorrow, was the close companion of her

bereaved friend, and he was in attendance on Adelaide Turrett, who daily became weaker, gaiety was out of the question. The overwhelming private grief of each removed for a time all questions of worldly diversion from their unfrequent conversations. But not the less did she feel that his world and hers were wide apart. Even his sympathy reminded her of the separation. Instead of descending to her woe, he strove to raise her from it. Instead of joining in her hope that her chastisement might be patiently endured and be profitable to her soul, he encouraged her to make light of it. He told her to look away from the rod which she was meekly kissing. He exhorted her not to be cast down and discomfited, but to anticipate the approach of brighter days. She, without being able to speak frankly of it, wanted him to recognize her 'conversion,' but he designedly pretended not to observe it. In short, the same sort of division had arisen between him and her which existed between Martha and John Bromhead—throughout the long years when he, outwardly religious and decorous, was pursuing vain ambitions.

John Bromhead still clung to the hope that Carry would by love's aid lead Edgar over to her side; but Martha with sad joy was sure that such hope could not be realized. The lesson of her own secret life convinced her that the lamb and the wolf would sooner lie down together than her darling be mated with the world-loving young Squire. There was a tinge of fanatic fervour in the satisfaction with which the mother (whose strongest sentiment was devotion to her only child) regarded Carry's speechless anguish, and thanked God that He had plucked her as a brand from the fire.

Her gratitude was boundless to Mr. Reeve, whom she regarded as the instrument by which, through the merciful wisdom of the Almighty, her child's regeneration had been accomplished. Feeling thus, it was no marvel that Martha went often to the services at St. Mary's, and seldom to the meeting-house of the 'persuasion.'

Pale cheek and tearful eye told the conflict of poor Carry's thoughts and affections. The nearer she approached the terrible decision that 'she and Edgar must part—because she *dared* not be his' the stronger, deeper, more intense was her love for him. The powers that were tearing her away from him were tearing the heart from her stainless breast. God help her! May God help all such sufferers!

In the meantime the angel of the Hollow House was moving fast along 'the downward slope that leads to death.'

Those who spoke evil words of Edgar Turrett said nothing, knew nothing of the filial tenderness he showed in those last days to the gentle creature who was leaving 'the old home,'—leaving it dark indeed! They knew only the 'rough side' of his nature, and had not even a glimpse of the tender. They knew the wild young Squire—the bold rider, the free drinker, the overbearing opponent, the horse-racing idler, who had encumbered himself with debts. The other side of the picture was not before them. They saw the hand that was ready to strike, and bold at play;—but not the hand which, gentle as a woman's, arranged Adelaide Turrett's pillows, gave her medicine and wine, smoothed away the curl from her forehead. Are not too many of us, in like manner, quick to see the bad, and slow to perceive the good of those against whom we jostle, or on whom from a distance, we coldly speculate, in our passage

through this strange world—where, as ‘little Fan’ said, ‘people trouble themselves so?’ Men of cruel tongues! be well assured that it is easier to detect,—far, far easier to describe—the unlovely than the beautiful of human nature. The weak know the secrets of weakness; whilst the strong alone can discern the signs and tell the virtues of strength.

Adelaide Turrett died before the close of February.

Three days before her death she said to Edgar,

“My boy, you wont have to wait on me much longer. How good and careful and loving you have been!”

“Dear aunt,” replied the young man in a low voice, “is there nothing you would wish me to do,—by-and-by,—by-and-by, dear aunt,—when my best comfort will be to carry out your wishes?”

Whereupon Adelaide, in words, few, simple, solemn, gave her last directions.

“Dear Edgar,” she said, “I am glad you have thus reminded me, for of one or two things I wish to speak to you. When I am away, you will find my will in my desk, bequeathing all my nothing of worldly wealth to you, and appointing you my only executor. Besides my trinkets and books, which you will like to give to Carry, I shall leave just nothing of any value behind me. Not long ago I had a considerable sum of money in the Merton-Piggott bank, but I parted with it,—gave it away, for a purpose of which I may not speak. Now, my father does not know I parted with it, but thinks that it still remains in the bank. If you can manage to effect it, I should wish him to be kept till the last in ignorance that I gave away the money. If the fact came to his knowledge, it might greatly disturb him. But, darling, practise no deceit with him. All I wish

of you is to abstain from speaking to him about my old account at the bank, until he enters on the subject. Should he actually talk to you about it, tell him no untruth. Dear, dear Edgar, have nothing to do with guile or artifice. Be frank and open to the world. Trust it; have no concealments from it. Whatever sorrow may fall upon you,—never mind what it is, Edgar,—do not hide it; tell it out bravely; have courage to endure pity.”

She spoke these words slowly, and with many pauses; but as she made the last utterances of the address, a slight flush on her wan, wasted cheek, and the brightness of her eyes, showed that she was deeply stirred.

Knowing what he then knew, Edgar discerned the pathetic significance of the concluding sentences; but had it not been for the occurrences of the two preceding months, they would have greatly perplexed him.

Having thus directed him, Adelaide Turrett spoke to him briefly about certain poor people on her list of pensioners, whom, together with her faithful servant, she committed to the young Squire's generous care. Those directions given, she made one last request.

“And, Edgar, dearest,” she said with composure, “when I have left you, put up in the church a plain white tablet, to mark my life and death. Let it bear no inscription but my name, the date of my death, the age at which I died,—and these words, ‘Faithful unto death: Faithful after Death.’ You will not forget the words. If you do, there is a memorandum on the back of my will to remind you of them. And now, darling, I will take my thoughts from this world,—and fix them elsewhere.”

On the last day of her life she wrote on a slip of paper, "Dear Child,—I am going. Come to me in Heaven, with those I love." Written with pencil, as the dying woman lay upon her bed, the words were scarcely legible; but they were there, and putting the paper into Edgar's hand Adelaide Turrett whispered, "Give it to Carry,—give it to her with my love."

After that effort she fell asleep, and remained till the evening—dozing and waking, whilst the old Squire and his grandson kept watch by her side.

Whenever her eyes opened and rested upon them, she smiled her old smile of trustful gratitude, and murmured some short sentence of endearment. But she made no effort to converse with them. Her thoughts were drawn from this world, and—fixed elsewhere.

When the hall clock struck the hour of nine, she woke up from the last of her brief periods of slumber, and rising from her pillow, with strength she had not displayed for several days, said, "Father, come near to me. I will bid you farewell in a whisper."

Whereupon the blind old man rose, and stretched forth his arms, which Edgar guided to her whom they would embrace.

"Oh, father, father," murmured Adelaide Turrett audibly, and then she whispered a few brief words in his ear—words that brought (even at that awful moment) a look of subdued gladness to his face.

Then Adelaide Turrett softly called Edgar to her; when having gazed with dim eyes into her sacred beauty, and heard the words, "Farewell, farewell," come from her lips, he fell upon his knees, and said, "Oh, give me your blessing—before it is too late."

Scarcely twenty seconds passed, and then the good

creature stretched forth her hands and, laying them on his head, said "My blessing be with you, dear. Oh, God, guard him!—out of Thy mercy keep him from evil!—out of Thy mercy bring him up to Thy everlasting heaven!"

She never spoke again.

As she made this brief prayer, she fell back upon her pillow, and her spirit returned to Him who gave it.

It is all over. For her the end has come, of the world where 'people trouble themselves so.'

And the blind old man, with tears rolling down his cheeks, is thinking of her—thinking of her in her infantile loveliness, when she played on the hearthrug at his feet, striking them with her toys, and merrily crying 'Papa;' thinking of her in her graceful girlhood, when she was the light and music of his widowed home; thinking of the glow of gladness that used to brighten her face when he made promise to take her into the country to stay with Uncle Gervase at the Hollow House; thinking of her when his heart beat proudly as he took her to concert or ball, to park or gardens; thinking of her as she was when all men who saw her paid homage to her charms; thinking of her as she was in her lowest wretchedness, long, long ago, when he kneeled down by her bed in Fitzgerald Passage, Old Law Quarter, London, and in her quiet chamber heard that fearful secret which she has now lived down; thinking with comfort of his words, uttered when that terrible secret was first told to him, "Child, I never loved thee as I do now—now that thou art in such need of me. How could'st thou dread my anger, when I have no feeling for thee but commiseration and strong love?"—thinking of her as she was during all the years of her seclusion in Castle Hollow—tender,

truthful, patient, wise—a very saint of heaven ; thinking of her as the companion who used to ride by his side over the heaths, walk with him in the old happy garden, and sing to him when his heart was sad ; thinking of her as his grandson's playmate, teacher, friend ; thinking of her as she lies there on her still bed,—having lived her secret down.

Oh, why do people trouble themselves so ?

CHAPTER VIII.

COUSIN STEPHEN.

As Edgar turned away from the church, after Adelaide Turrett had been placed with her dead kindred, he found comfort in the thought that neither the praise nor the blame of this world could any longer reach her. One part of his duty had been performed. He had secured her from the anguish of learning in her last days that her secret had transpired—had reached him from whom she had been most anxious to keep it hidden.

He attended to her injunctions, assuring her servant and pensioners that her death had not left them friendless, giving directions for the tablet which would bear the words, 'Faithful unto death—faithful after death,' and as her executor and sole legatee taking possession of what she had termed her 'nothing of wealth.' He gave Carry the gentle creature's farewell note, 'Dear child, I am going. Come to me in Heaven with those I love;' and as he saw the tears rise in the sorrow-stricken, terror-stricken girl's eyes, he was not

surprised at her emotion, though he was ignorant of one cause that contributed to it. Carry was thinking of a certain interview with the friend who was dead ; and she saw that she was already nigh the time " when, stretching her hands upwards to the heavens, where the unseen angels sit in glory, she would cry aloud, ' I cannot lead him to you. I am blind, and weak, and helpless myself. I cannot lead him to you. It would be sin in me to try to lead him to you.' "

Fortunately the old Squire did not ask a single question about his daughter's property. His total want of curiosity on the subject was only another sign of that carelessness about the ordinary affairs of life, which he had manifested since his illness of the preceding spring, and which had become still more marked during the two opening months of the new year. He declined to talk with his tenants, and was even reluctant to admit the steward to an occasional interview ; asking Edgar to take all trouble off his hands, and to keep even the sound of business from his ears. Even when he was well enough to stir about, he had no desire to take exercise. To mount his horse he was no longer able ; but Edgar urged him to take daily drives in the old coach. Five or six times the Squire complied with his grandson's wish, but Edgar soon saw that the new exercise was no recreation to him—indeed, that it worried him. So the coach and horses stood idle ; and ' old Tom ' had fewer occasions for appearing in ' high livery.' When the Squire had set aside his recommendation, Edgar, deeming it bad for the broken veteran to sit all day long in darkness by the fireside, entreated him to continue his old habit of walking in the garden, and enforced the counsel with Dr. Magnum's opinion that it would be ill with him if he discontinued every kind of bodily exertion.

To which representation the old man replied tetchily; "Let it be ill with me! Why not? I have had enough, and more than enough, of life!"

So Edgar left the aged Squire to do as he would, and day by day saw him grow more taciturn and self-absorbed. For a week at a time Antony Turrett would not cross the threshold of his hall door; and for hours together not a single word would escape his lips. He even ceased to inquire after Carry Bromhead's health, when his grandson informed him that he had been riding over to Merton-Piggott. At times, the presence of Edgar in the library seemed to distress him; whilst, on the other hand, it certainly never tended to raise his spirits. He preferred to be waited on by his ancient servant; and of his few utterances, the greater number were directed to that faithful attendant. To Edgar, as well as to the servants of the Hollow House, it appeared that sorrow for his child had darkened the old man's understanding; and to some extent, they were right in their opinion. On all except one field of thought, his mind *was* clouded; but on everything which related to that one exception, his memory was as clear, and his purpose as strong as ever. The secret—which his daughter had lived down, and he was still living down—was ever before him, when he was not asleep. Every circumstance surrounding the birth of that fearful mystery, every feature of his long endeavour to hide it from the world, he could recall with microscopic exactness; but to other subjects of consideration, his mental vision was dull, confused, incurious. Throughout the year of 1821, and the opening months of 1822, sensible of the rapid decline of his physical and intellectual powers, he had by constant efforts of volition fortified himself in his purpose to 'live it down;' and

now that his companion in life-deceit had left his side, an overwhelming sense that on his enfeebled powers depended the success of twenty-nine years' endeavour, subjected every faculty of his mind to the one great end. As he sat in his easy-chair, hour after hour, speechless, unobservant, and (as far as appearance was concerned) bordering on dotage, his thoughts were—"My work will soon be done. I must wait patiently. Soon I shall have lived it down. Nothing shall escape me. No word—no sign. No alarm shall surprise me into an admission. *She* has lived it down. Soon I shall follow her. And then it will be hidden for ever. I will never again speak freely with Edgar. If I do, I may unawares let out something. I will do, think, care for nothing—which may not help me to 'live it down.'" Of course, such thoughts as these never formed themselves in audible words or lowest whispers. But they were the incessant occupants of his mind when he was awake.

To this had 'rare Nan Turrett' come. Little had 'rare Nan' foreseen such a cheerless close to a life that began in brightest sunshine;—as little, reader, as you can foresee what you will sink to in the after-time, before the priest looks down upon your coffin-lid, and says, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Oh, then, while you are what you are, be up and doing!

Startling as the statement may appear to some readers, it may be affirmed that this morbid condition in all probability prolonged Antony Turrett's life—and task. For years (as it is doubtless remembered) he had laboured under an affection of the heart, which Dr. Magnum had said might terminate his existence at any moment of sudden excitement. Protected from violent emotion, he might live till his powers had

been utterly consumed by senile decay. Such was the physician's opinion. In as far, therefore, as the concentration of his faculties on one old familiar topic hedged him in from novel interests, and defended him from sudden paroxysms of feeling, so far was the partial death of his mind favourable to the life of his body.

But though the old man did not care to ask any questions about his child's property, the fact, that Adelaide Turrett had for a secret object parted not long before her death with a large sum of money, was a matter of grave, though unselfish, concern to Edgar. She had vouchsafed no explanation of the occurrence to Edgar. "I parted with it,—gave it away, for a purpose of which I may not speak. Now, my father does not know I have parted with it; but thinks that it still remains in the Bank. If you can manage it, I should wish him to be kept till the last in ignorance that I gave away the money." For what purpose could she have parted with the money? For what purpose of which she dared not tell him? For what purpose that made her anxious that the transaction should be kept from her father's knowledge? To these questions Edgar could give no answer,—only a horrible suspicion that Alec Barber had by some means imparted to her his discovery of her secret, and by threatening to disclose it to the world had extorted the money from her! Facts concurred to support this suspicion. He knew the date when Alec Barber had commenced his investigations into the concealed history of the Turrett family, and also the time when those investigations met with successful termination. The latter date was shortly before the first manifest change in Miss Turrett's health. Could it be that, before he extorted money

from him, the scoundrel had plundered her? Recalling all the circumstances which tended to answer this question in the affirmative, Edgar was not forgetful that, since the time when Adelaide's decline set in, he had felt surprised at the command of money enjoyed by the King's Heath adventurer. The more he reflected on the events of the preceding year and a half, the more he feared that the rogue had been playing a game of double treachery.

Suspicion strengthened into conviction.

He could not rest till he had put himself in possession of all facts which could throw light on what still remained in darkness.

No harm, he thought, would be done, if he called at the Merton-Piggott Bank, and inquired of Mr. Dowse the exact date at which his aunt had withdrawn her money,—and the circumstances of its withdrawal. He decided to make such inquiry.

In accordance with this resolution, the young Squire rode over to Merton-Piggott, and entering Mr. Dowse's parlour asked the bank-agent for a few minutes' private conversation.

"Certainly, Mr. Turrett," said Stephen Dowse, closing the parlour door. "No one will overhear us. I will give you my best attention. No one will overhear us, sir. When I close that door, my clerks know that I am engaged, and do not let callers interrupt me."

The bank-agent was unable to conjecture what had induced Edgar thus to call upon him. The young Squire had never kept an account at the bank. It could not be that he was about to pay money in, under his own name; for, as the agent well knew, he had sufficient uses for whatever cash he could command. Possibly he was going to ask for a loan; but it was

scarcely to be expected that he would make such a demand of Carry Bromhead's near kinsman,—of John Bromhead's close friend. Perhaps he was going to reveal the causes which had led to the violent scene in the Gedgrave 'Horse-shoes.' But no,—that could not be it. Stephen Dowse knew enough of Alec Barber's intercourse with the young Squire, to reject the thought as an impossibility.

"Have you been in Gray Street this morning, Mr. Turrett?" inquired the agent, resuming his seat.

"No—I shall, however, call there before I return home."

"Mr. Bromhead is not well."

"Indeed?"

"The gout has been flying about him for some days past."

"Ah,—so Mrs. Bromhead told me the day before yesterday. I was sorry to hear it. Is there much the matter?"

"Well, he is in bed again. And Dr. Magnum thinks it will go badly with him. You see, Mr. Turrett, this is the third attack. I mean the third *severe* spring attack."

"I am very, very sorry to hear it!"

"Still I am able to attend to your business, sir."

Thus recalled to the object of his visit, Edgar after a few moment's consideration said, "I called on you, Mr. Dowse, to ask you a few questions relative to an account which my aunt kept in your bank for several years. She left me her sole executor."

"I presumed so, Mr. Turrett."

"That account was closed by the withdrawal of a considerable sum from your hands towards the end of her life,—at least, at a date not far from the present time?"

"Exactly so. Miss Turrett called on me one morning, and received every penny that she had entrusted to my keeping."

"Could you tell me the sum then paid her?"

"Twelve hundred pounds, in twelve notes of £100 each," replied Stephen Dowse, his surprise at the inquiry being manifested by a slight movement of his eyebrows.

"Thank you. You are sure that was the exact sum?"

"Quite, sir; but I can refer to the book, and show you the figures if you like."

"I wish you would be good enough to refer, and tell me the numbers of the notes, and also the exact date when she took the money."

"Certainly, Mr. Turrett. I shall be most happy to do so. As to time,—let me see—she came here when she was staying at Bassingbourne House. But wait a minute. I'll fetch the book. That will be best."

Having brought a ledger from the outer office to his visitor in the parlour, Stephen Dowse opened it and enabled Edgar to see at a glance the history of his aunt's account.

"I suppose I may copy the date when it was closed?"

"Of course, sir, if you require to do so."

"Ah,—and these are the numbers of the notes?"

"They are the numbers, Mr. Turrett."

"I will copy them also," observed Edgar, making entries in his betting-book.

"You are quite at liberty to do so."

Shutting up his book, and replacing it in his pocket when he had completed his entries, Edgar thanked the agent for his courtesy, and left the bank, declaring

an intention to walk forthwith to Gray Street and inquire for the merchant.

For three minutes, after the departure of his visitor, Stephen Dowse sat in his official chair, immersed in thought.

That time having elapsed, he changed his posture, and murmured, "I didn't think he'd been such a fool. The man who hopes to fling dust in Stephen Dowse's eyes by such a shallow, boyish bit of play as that, must be a fool. Wanted to know the amount, did he? Indeed! Wanted to get the numbers of notes? Indeed! Would like to make me believe that he didn't know them before,—ah? Would like Stephen Dowse to imagine that the reckless spendthrift who beggared his old-maid aunt, and broke her heart into the bargain, didn't pouch the poor lady's money? So he has come here, and gone through those silly antics. Why, he must have drunk away his wits, and must think me an idiot! He must think Stephen Dowse a *drivelling* idiot! He sees my influence is growing stronger and stronger in Gray Street, and fears I may tell Carry about that disgraceful, ruffianly fight in a common Inn parlour. Does he? By Cræsus, if he only guessed how much I know about his rascally transactions with Alec Barber, he'd tremble in his boots,—for all his stuck-up pride! I shouldn't wonder, now that he condescends to wish for my good opinion, if he were also to condescend to call on my wife, and pay her the attention which she has a right to expect from any man (be he squire or no squire, spendthrift or no spendthrift), who hopes to ally himself with *my family*! But he shall never have a penny of John Bromhead's money. He shan't beggar poor little Carry, as he beggared his aunt. I'll see to that! I shall be her guardian; and as her guardian, it will be my duty to open

the poor child's eyes to his real character. I will tell John Bromhead all I know this very evening. Ah ! it's best to lose no more time. If I don't tell John Bromhead at once, he may leave a stupid will behind him, that wont give me all the powers I ought to have. "Poor John ! Poor John ! I should like to prove to him, by this last great service, how thoroughly and completely I have forgiven all past differences."

Acting on this generous resolution, Stephen Dowse went up that evening to Gray Street, and had a long confidential interview with the merchant, as the latter lay in bed.

When the agent entered John Bromhead's house, Martha received him in the hall.

"Well, Martha," observed Stephen Dowse in his kindest manner—for he felt himself most amiably disposed to his cousin and her family, now that he had them to a certain extent in his power, and they recognized his natural inherent right to control them, "how is he to-night, cousin ? how is John ?"

Martha led her cousin into the drawing-room, where she could speak to him privately, and having closed the door, answered, "Worse,—John is worse ! Dr. Magnum has been here twice to-day, and he speaks hopefully, as he always does speak ; but I can see that he apprehends the worst. Oh, Stephen ! I have made up my mind for the worst, and so has John. He said to me this afternoon, 'Martha, this is my third spring attack, and I know it will be my last. I shan't trouble you much longer.'—He never spoke so before."

"Poor fellow !—how is he in his mind ?"

"Quite easy,—quite resigned. He asked me to-day to invite Mr. Reeve to call on him to-morrow. The rector will call at eleven."

"He has said nothing about Carry and her affairs?"

"Nothing;—but he thinks the more. She is with him now. Oh, cousin Stephen, if he would but speak one word to her—one word—showing that he doubts whether that marriage would be for her happiness,—that he repents having urged her to it!"

"Martha, would you like me to speak to him about it?"

"What could you say, Stephen,—that I have not already said?"

"Never mind *what* it is I can say. Only mind this. I know something about the young Squire, which—if I told it to your husband—would make him implore Carry to break off the engagement, even though he were at his last breath. Shall I speak it?"

"What is it?—tell me!—Dear Stephen, tell me!" begged the woman.

"No,—I may not tell you. Indeed, I ought not to tell him,—not even him; for it was communicated to me in strict confidence. But to save Carry from that reprobate's clutches, I would stretch a point, and tell *him*. But I mayn't tell *you*."

"Would it disturb him very much?"

"I should hope not,—think not. It would only convince him of what he already more than suspects,—that the engagement was a vain, foolish fancy; and that Carry ought not to squander her wealth, and ruin her soul—by marrying him!"

"I am sure he feels it. But, God's mercy be with me, how can I decide?—What if it should kill him?" asked the woman, wavering.

"You must think of your child, as well as of him. At the worst, I can only shorten the earthly life of a dying man by my words. Not to utter them may injure her eternal welfare!"

"Oh, Stephen, Stephen," cried the wife and the mother, covering her eyes with her hands, "how can a poor feeble wretch of a woman say 'ay' or 'nay?'"

For a minute there was a pause, which Stephen Dowse broke by saying in a voice of emotion and solemnity, "Martha, if I take this responsibility upon me,—if I exercise my own judgment,—will you hold me guiltless, whatever may happen?"

"Oh, God reward you, Stephen," ejaculated the poor woman, glad to shift a heavy and indeed insupportable responsibility from her own weakness to her cousin's strength, "God reward you for the steady love you've always shown me! You know that when he has gone away, next to my child, you'll be nearest to me—in love as well as blood. May Heaven bless you!"

Fortified by this evasive consent to the course he had determined to adopt, but not quite easy under the fervent tone of gratitude in which it was made, Stephen Dowse after brief deliberation made answer, "Then go upstairs, Martha, and tell him that if he feels equal to seeing me, I should like to have a word or two with him. Should he tell you to bring me up to him, you had better get Carry out of the room. Poor fellow! Poor John!"

Whereupon Martha left her cousin to his meditations in the drawing-room.

On the whole those meditations were agreeable. Having in the first instance begun to pry into Edgar Turrett's affairs in the malevolent hope of making some discovery whereby he could give the merchant pain, Stephen Dowse had fully persuaded himself that he had played the part of spy under the influence of consider-

ations pure and honourable. He was no longer anxious to be revenged on his former rival, and pay back on his tongue the bitterness of his sarcastic speeches. His sole aim was to rescue a simple and confiding girl from the power of a profligate ne'er-do-weel.

Other men, besides the bank-agent, have changed their motives without altering their course of action,—and have derived much comfort from the change.

"He would like to see you, Stephen," said Martha, returning after a few minutes' absence.

"Carry still with him, Martha?"

"Yes;—but I have spoken to her. She will leave you together."

"Very good. I will take this candle, and find my own way upstairs. I needn't trouble you to conduct me. I should know the way in the dark."

When Stephen Dowse entered the merchant's bedroom, Carry rose from her seat by her father's side, and giving the bank-agent a kiss left the chamber.

"Ah, Stephen," said John Bromhead with composure, when he and his visitor had exchanged a score or more brief sentences, "you see, I have made up my mind for the worst—or what sick men are wont to call the worst. I have all the first symptoms of a severe attack; and I haven't sufficient stamina left in me to bear what I went through last spring, and the spring before. All my worldly affairs are, as you know, arranged. You'll do a cousin's part by Martha and Carry,—when I am gone?"

"Please God! Please God,—I will!" replied the agent.

"She can still withdraw from that engagement, if she feels it right for her to do so," added the father,

conveniently entering upon the subject about which Stephen Dowse wished to speak.

"Have you told her so, John?"

"No, no. If I did that, it would seem like telling her to break it off; and before she could have thought of loving him, I encouraged her to do so. I couldn't advise her to dismiss him, unless I had graver reasons for doing so than I now have. He is just what he was when she accepted him. The alteration is in her. The young Squire is to be pitied. I am sure he loves her."

"Possibly he may not have altered, John Bromhead; but if so, you had no correct notion what he then was."

"How mean you, Stephen?"

"John Bromhead, I should like to speak to you about the young Squire. I know more of him than you, for all his being just as good as one of your own household. But I fear to disturb you."

"Pish!—speak out, man. For months I have been uneasy about him. If you change doubt into sad certainty, what of it?"

"Old friend," said the bank-agent slowly, and with an appearance of emotion, "I take a heavy responsibility upon myself, when I talk to you on such a matter just now; but if I mean to do my duty to my cousin, and your child, I mayn't shirk responsibility."

"What is it, Stephen?" asked the merchant, sharply, and yet in a tone of supplication, "I implore you to keep nothing from me."

"John, you'd best speak a word to Carry, and bid her have done with the young Squire. He's a bad young man."

"How!—Give me the proofs. Oh, Dowse, don't

ask me to judge any man till I have proofs of his guilt."

"I can't give them, except under your strict promise not to speak a word about them. The worst facts against him came to me in the way of business; and if I communicate them to you, I must have your promise not to breathe a syllable about them to living mortal except myself.—Do you promise?"

"I promise," replied Probity Bromhead slowly, "and there is not the man who can prove me ever to have broken my word."

"Then, John, be calm, listen,—and I'll tell you what, for the sake of dear Carry, I don't dare to keep from you any longer."

Raising himself in his bed, and propping himself up with a pillow, John Bromhead assumed the attitude and air of an attentive listener. There was a flush on his wasted cheek, and an eager expression in his eye, as he said, "Now, Stephen, do be quick, old friend,—you'll kill me outright, if you keep me in suspense. Tell me the worst."

Then the agent slowly and deliberately (without receiving a single interruption from his auditor) commenced, continued, and finished his revelations; saying that Edgar Turrett was steeped in debt, and was in the hands of the worst rascal of the worst King's Heath clique; showing how he had spent Miss Turrett's accumulated money, before the death of that lady; explaining how he had on two occasions borrowed large sums from a Sedgehassock money-lender; describing minutely the scene at the Gedgrave 'Horseshoes,' when the young Squire had chastised the blackleg, and then started with alarm lest a certain paper should be inspected by any other than himself or Alec Barber; and finally putting into the merchant's hands a paper.

"There, John," said Stephen Dowse, "read it for yourself. Only, unless you wish to bring me into trouble, don't speak of it to living man except myself."

"Why, Stephen, it's a post-obit bond!" gasped the merchant.

"It's the copy of one, John Bromhead. The original is in the keeping of Forrester, the King's Heath money-lender, who has made an advance upon it. The young Squire is in Alec Barber's clutches, and Alec Barber is in Forrester's clutches, and Forrester is in my clutches. That's how we hang together. And I needn't tell *you* that Stephen Dowse is in nobody's clutches,—that there isn't the man living who would dare to touch Stephen Dowse on the shoulder."

"What a sum!" said John Bromhead, turning white and faint, as he read the copy of the bond, which has already been transcribed in these pages. "What a sum to be bound for to such a man!—What can it mean?"

"Mind the date, John," observed Stephen Dowse. "The date is subsequent to the time when the young Squire knew the fellow to be an utter rascal, and struck him to the ground in the Gedgrave 'Horse-shoes.' So you see, he bound himself to pay that sum and annuity to a man *whom he knew to be a rogue!* As for the consideration, that I can't tell you. That isn't mentioned; but if it were, I don't doubt you'd find a dark story between them. The story was in that paper which the young Squire snatched up, so that I shouldn't see it. John Bromhead, common sense tells us that the money is hush-money, to keep Alec Barber quiet for a time about some black piece of business. A debt to that amount was never legally incurred by Mr. Edgar Turrett to a King's Heath horse-dealing jockey. He

has paid for silence till he can marry your daughter, and throw away her money, as he is already throwing away his own,—ay, as he threw away his poor aunt's."

Wretched young man!—wretched young man!" ejaculated John Bromhead.

"He *is* a wretched young man," assented Stephen Dowse in severest tone, "and a wretched young man shouldn't marry your child. There's nothing in this bond to lead you to suppose that it puts an end to Alec Barber's power over him. Indeed it justifies an inference of the exact reverse. Let Carry marry him,—and the King's Heath scamp will get *her* as well as *him* under the screw."

Shuddering with horror, the sick man let fall the paper, and sunk backwards.

"Don't be disturbed, John!" said Stephen. "Bear up, man. Remember me. Don't punish me for having tried to do my duty to you."

"Stephen, give me the cordial," gasped Probity Bromhead; "quick—quick,—give me the glass, and I shall get over it in a minute."

Fortunately, Stephen Dowse knew the bottle which contained the cordial medicine, and had administered a dose of it to the patient on a previous occasion. He had, therefore, no need to call Martha or Carry to his assistance.

Mixing the stimulant with a proper proportion of cold water, the agent put the glass to his friend's lips, and with lively satisfaction saw it drunk down.

Before three minutes had passed John Bromhead was better, and said with affecting fervour, "Stephen Dowse, from my inmost heart I thank you! You have shown a noble courage in speaking to me. A dying man's thanks to you, Stephen! Of course, I

will keep your secret. We wont talk any more just now. Come and see me to-morrow afternoon—(let's say at three o'clock). By that time I'll make up my mind what I ought to do. In the meantime, don't let Martha or Carry suspect that anything of importance has passed between us.—The Lord has punished my vain, wicked ambition!—The Lord's hand is upon me!"

Having remained in the room a few minutes longer, until the sick man had recovered his customary appearance of tranquillity, Stephen Dowse bade his cousin's husband farewell, and went down stairs.

In the hall Martha met him.

"How is he, Stephen?" she whispered, laying a tremulous hand on her cousin's arm.

"Very well, very well," said Stephen Dowse, in a low voice. "He's quite composed now!"

"You have spoken to him?"

"Yes, and he bore it very well. But mind, Martha,—*be very careful that you do not let him suspect* that you know I have been talking to him about that matter."

"I will be very careful, Stephen."

"And be careful, also, that you do not rouse Carry's suspicions."

"Of course, of course, Stephen."

"Now, I must go."

The woman lifted the latch of the hall-door and said, "Heaven bless you, Cousin Stephen!"—as the agent crossed the threshold, and walked down the steps into Gray Street.

As he crossed Abbey Place, on his way home, the moon was out in the cloudless heavens.

Though his nature was one that gave little heed to

the 'beautiful,' Stephen Dowse paused for a minute to rest his eyes on the old tower and gateway, which stood before him in their silent loveliness.

Yes, there they stood, those silent witnesses, fixed there in the far-off ages !

Those silent witnesses, looking down upon the world ' where people trouble themselves so !'

CHAPTER IX.

A LAST REQUEST AND A LAST ANSWER.

STEPHEN DOWSE had removed John Bromhead's last faint chance of surviving another attack.

The merchant passed a night of sleeplessness and troubled thought ; but by a great effort he so far concealed his mental agitation, that it altogether escaped Carry's observation, whilst Martha was led to hope that Stephen's communications (of the particulars of which she was in perfect ignorance) had not done her husband harm. But when Dr. Magnum called at an early hour the next morning, he saw that his patient was worse—much worse.

“ You have been mentally disturbed, Mr. Bromhead,” said the physician.

“ I have been,” was the frank answer, made slowly and impressively. “ But don't tell any one. And, dear doctor, don't give me any hopes, for the event will falsify them. Mr. Reeve is coming to see me at eleven o'clock. My case is one for him, doctor—not for you.”

"Come, come—don't be despondent."

"I am not despondent, sir;—I am only looking at the truth."

"Your case is certainly one for grave apprehension," replied Dr. Magnum, firmly; "but, on my word of honour, I do not consider it hopeless. I would not deceive you!"

"And, my dear friend," answered 'Probity' Bromhead, with his old courteous manner, "you will continue to do for me all that lies within the power of your noble and benevolent art. If I am right, you will comfort me to the last. Your kind voice is balm to suffering of mind as well as of body."

"You must not vex yourself about business."

"I will not, after to-morrow. When to-morrow has passed over, you'll find me an obedient as well as grateful patient. It will at least comfort Martha and my child to see me steadily carrying out your directions."

Dr. Magnum could not do otherwise than yield to such gentle firmness.

At eleven o'clock the rector called, and after stopping nearly an hour with the merchant, took his leave, promising to call again during the next day.

On the clergyman's departure, John Bromhead took medicine and food, and slept for more than an hour. After the nap he chatted cheerfully with Martha and Carry till three o'clock, when a knock at the street-door made him say, "That's Cousin Stephen's knock. He promised to call on me at this hour. You must leave us together for an hour, my dear ones. I want to talk with him about business. God bless thee, Martha! Carry, give me a kiss before you leave me."

When the women had given place to Cousin Stephen,

John Bromhead went straight to the business of their interview.

"Stephen," he said, slowly, "I must repeat the thanks which I gave you last night. You have shown yourself my very good friend. This marriage will not, *must* not take place. I must make another will. Take my instructions for it (which will be short and simple), get it made, and bring it to me to sign at this hour to-morrow. You can manage that for me?"

"Surely, John—surely."

"Then here in half a dozen sentences I will give you my wishes on the subject. There are pens and paper—write from my dictation."

During the next quarter of an hour, the bank-agent was fully occupied, putting upon paper the words that came from the merchant's lips.

"There," said John Bromhead, when he had completed his instructions, "that will not take much parchment. Fortunately I have already disposed by deed of a suitable portion of my property for charitable purposes."

Instead of seeming exhausted, the exertion of thinking and speaking appeared for a time to give John Bromhead strength and spirits. With only a short pause, he went on to another point of the topic which necessarily occupied the chief place in his mind.

"I think, Stephen," he said, "it will be best for me to give no hint to either Martha or Carry of the reasons which induce me to hope my child will not become Mr. Edgar Turrett's wife."

"Indeed."

"If matters are allowed to take their own course, I believe that difference of religious views will alone

separate them. Carry already feels that she would not be a congenial wife to a pleasure-loving husband ; and Martha, who has all along been averse to the match, is sure to promote rather than repress any such feeling in our child. Therefore, if I were to say nothing whatever to either of them on the subject, I think it most probable that the compact would be cancelled shortly after my death."

"You had better speak to them, John."

"I will do so—it is my intention to do so. But my words shall not give them any clue to your revelations. As I must keep your counsel about the bond, I may as well extend my reserve so far as to say nothing about his minor pecuniary embarrassments. You see, whatever I could say about them to Martha would not increase her disapproval of the engagement, or her anxiety to bring it to an end."

"That's true. But it's Carry who is most to be considered."

"Exactly ; and if, when I tell her that I have changed my opinion of Mr. Edgar Turrett, I were to mention his pecuniary involvements, it is more than merely possible, Stephen, that the force of my representations would be lessened by the mention of such particulars. Young, generous, inexperienced, the dear girl could scarcely be expected to regard his debts as sure indications of want of principle. She would see in them merely the proofs of misfortune, which she could remove by endowing him with her wealth."

"Umph !—You, of course, know more about her than I.—I have never studied women much—especially young women."

"Poor child," continued John Bromhead with a sigh, "she loves him ! Remember that—she loves him !

And that being the case, whatever conscience, or principle, or religious sentiment may dictate, she would most likely refuse to give him up, if she deemed him to be in trouble and difficulty that especially demanded sympathy and aid.

“She wouldn’t desert him in his hour of need?—That sort of thing I understand.”

“Exactly. She is just in that state with regard to him that I believe the development of her religious life will, if it be not checked by counter-influences, carry her away from him. But if her generous emotions were aroused by hearing that he was in trouble, consequent upon imprudence, or by hearing him spoken ill of—in short, if she imagined him to be the victim of circumstances, or a sufferer from the injustice of others,—I don’t believe that any power (not even her sense of duty to God) could make her give him up. With all her gentleness, Stephen, she has a high spirit. She is a noble creature, Stephen—a noble girl!”

“There’s reason in what you say, John. I don’t doubt you are right. What’ll you do?”

“Just this :—I shall leave events to take their own course, only helping them the way they are going by a few words of hope that she will never marry Edgar Turrett if she has any misgiving, any doubt whatever, as to his moral or religious worth. By a few moderate words I shall be most likely to undo all I have done in bringing on this unhappy engagement.”

Had Stephen Dowse been an observer of the subtler distinctions of character, he would have silently remarked how, on the verge of the grave—to which he was descending in humiliation and remorse and sore distress (brought upon him in a great measure by his life-long habit of secretly controlling others)—John

Bromhead gave play to one of his principal characteristics, in thus marking out the course by which his child might be guided to an end, whilst she should suppose herself acting without external direction.

"Therefore, Stephen," continued John Bromhead, "when I am gone, don't be in a hurry to speak on this matter either to Martha or Carry. Let things take their own course, and don't seem even to be watching them. Unless I am mistaken—and I pray God that I may not be—there'll be little trouble for you to take in the matter. Before the grass is green on my grave at Battistow, the young Squire will in all probability receive his dismissal. But, Stephen, if time should go on without this result, you and Martha mayn't leave a stone unturned to prevent the marriage. Let Martha and Mr. Reeve first try affectionate advice and religious admonition with her. And if they do not succeed, do you, as a last desperate resource, see what the effect of your revelations will be. But keep silence about his debts, till all other means have failed."

Such was the tenor of 'Probity' Bromhead's instructions to the man whom he had appointed his child's guardian and trustee, in conjunction with Martha.

The particulars of John Bromhead's will do not need to be stated in full. In some respects they met Stephen Dowse's approval, but on certain points the provisions were not so stringent as he thought they should be. The agent had however the good sense and good taste to abstain from criticising them. Carry was left free to marry whom she liked; but her property was so settled upon her, that it would be out of her husband's control in case she married, without the consent of her mother and guardian, before she attained the age of five-and-twenty. The points which met Stephen Dowse's

strongest approbation were the clauses appointing him guardian, trustee, and executor, and assigning him a handsome legacy for his valuable services.

When Cousin Stephen brought the will (ready for signature and attestation), together with the lawyer who had drawn it, to Gray Street on the following day, he found John Bromhead weaker, but calm and clear in intellect. He was fully competent to transact business; but the pain and excitement of the preceding forty-eight hours had so greatly reduced his strength, that he was unable to speak in long sentences. When the will had been read to him, he perused it himself, and then signed it,—certain of his clerks (to whom he at the time made handsome presents of money) having been brought to his bed-side to act as witnesses.

“Now, Stephen, I have almost done with the world,” the merchant said, faintly and with difficulty, when the lawyer and witnesses had taken their departure. “You’ll come and see me again to-morrow. But farewell now, for the present. I cannot bear more exertion. Go down stairs, and—before you leave the house—send Martha to me. My best thanks to you, Stephen, for taking so much trouble for me.”

The evening of that day was an evening on which the town-club met; but Stephen Dowse was not present at the meeting. In the previous spring illnesses of the merchant, Stephen had found pleasure in assuring the club that John Bromhead’s friends would do well to prepare themselves for the worst, and in reminding the club that he never had put any trust in the merchant’s ‘bright complexion.’ But in this spring of 1822, he was in no humour for such gossip with his club-friends. The pompous, prying, meddling, fussy man had some gentle feelings in his nature, and they were roused by

recent occurrences, and by the knowledge that Death was standing over his ancient associate and rival. Something of selfish fear also subdued the agent,—a gloomy apprehension that the time was not so very far distant, when he too would lie in his bedroom, over the bank-parlour,—seeing his busy, scheming, not noble life taper down to nothing. In truth, Stephen's heart was heavy and discomforted. So, instead of joining the town-club, he sat by his own fire-side, opposite his wife, and opening his Bible read aloud the narrative of God's dealings with the Israelites in the wilderness.

While Stephen was thus reading passages of a volume which he had done well to have perused with greater frequency, John Bromhead (having endured a sharp paroxysm of gout-pain) lay on his bed feeble and dejected—and thus held converse with Martha.

“Martha, we're alone?”

“Quite alone, husband!”

“Where is Carry?”

“Downstairs. I told her I would call her if you wished to see her.”

“That is right!”

“You must be quiet, John. Don't talk.”

“I must speak to you for a little while.”

The wife was silent, but looked inquiringly and with sad tenderness at her husband,—who continued after a pause, “Martha,—I am thinking about Carry,—and Mr. Edgar Turrett.”

“Yes, dear,” rejoined the woman, observing to herself that he spoke of the young squire as ‘Mr. Edgar Turrett,’ whereas his wont had been to speak of him as ‘Edgar.’

“Martha,—from my inmost heart, I repent the part I took in bringing on the engagement. Dear wife, you

may not let them marry, unless the young Squire be converted—and become a new man. If they marry as they now are, they'll both look back on their wedding day as the blackest day of their lives."

A pause.

"John, dear John," replied the woman softly, but with hesitation, "do tell Carry what you feel—speak just a word to her, ever so short a word. Don't leave all the work to me."

"It will be no hard task for you, Martha. They are working asunder. If you only leave the work alone, it will finish itself."

To which assurance, whereto her heart assented, Martha renewed her entreaty—"Still, dear husband, do speak a word to her—ever so short a word—dear husband, do."

"Yes, yes; I will speak to her; but I shall not speak so strongly as I do to you, now we are in private together. I shall tell her that I have grave doubts whether the marriage will be for her happiness or his, and that I trust she will never marry any man whose religious views do not accord with her own. That will be enough to say to her, will it not?"

"Oh! thank you, dear, good husband," ejaculated the poor woman, "you have taken a heavy burden from my mind—a most heavy burden!"

"I will not speak to her to-night; I am not strong enough—I am faint and weak, and the fever is coming upon me again. To-morrow night will be time enough."

The next day, Dr. Magnum saw a decided change for the worse in his patient. The night had been passed by John Bromhead in sleeplessness, and fever, and great pain. The gout was flying about his body, and the action of the heart was irregular.

"I have not many days to live, dear doctor," observed the merchant.

"I fear not many, if this mischief continues. You are not so well as you were yesterday."

"How is my pulse? Once or twice last night my heart felt very strangely."

"Yes, my dear sir,—that is the point for fear."

"Ah! I understand you. You see you don't frighten me.—Dear doctor, when you go home to-day, give my love to your wife, and tell her that I do not cease to think of her,—in her trouble."

Greatly affected by his patient's calm demeanour, and his consideration for others, the physician took his leave, meeting Mr. Reeve at the street door.

"What is your report, Dr. Magnum?" inquired the rector.

"Ill, an ill report; but say nothing to disturb the family. He is aware of his state, and is quite calm."

"Yes," answered Mr. Reeve, in a low voice, "he is calm, for he is a humble-hearted Christian."

The rector's visit lasted only a few minutes.

In the course of the day, Stephen Dowse called; but the merchant sent him an affectionate message that he would not see him, for he was anxious to keep very quiet till the close of the day. Scarcely had the agent left the house, when Edgar Turrett called, and was informed by Carry that her father did not wish to see him.

The evening hour of nine was struck, and the merchant lay upon his bed, apparently no worse than he had been in the morning.

Beckoning Martha to him, he whispered something in her ear, whereupon she quitted the room, leaving him and Carry together.

"Darling, help me to sit up, and put the pillows behind me. Thank you, darling."

Having done her father's bidding, Carry resumed her seat, which was so placed that she and John Bromhead were face to face.

"Carry," said the father, in a firm, but low voice, "you *do* not, you *cannot*, regard your engagement to Edgar with unmingled pleasure."

The girl's face became ashy white, as she answered, "He is very, very good to me, dear father;—much better to me than I to him."

"Dear child," continued John Bromhead, "on the great subject on which husband and wife should be as one, you are wide asunder, wide as the poles."

"Father, dear father, he will come to me. I must be patient, and constant in prayer,—and God will bring him to me."

"Oh, that it may be so!" answered John Bromhead, solemnly, "but, dearest child, never become his bride till God has so changed him. The memory that I urged you to accept him lies heavy upon me, as a sin. Oh, remove the burden of it from my dying moments, and promise me you will not be his wife until he is converted."

With surprise and terror in her face, Carry, not knowing that the words passed her lips, ejaculated, "Father, I love him so very dearly."

"My child, love God more. Oh, my darling, when heavenly affection and earthly affection strive together within you, obey the former, subdue the latter. Give me thy promise never to become the wife of him or anyone whose religious views clearly differ from your own. Give me thy promise. Oh, Carry, thy dying father asks it!"

A minute's pause, and then, the girl raising tearless eyes, looked into her father's face, and said slowly, solemnly, "Father, I promise I will not be his wife till God has brought him to me."

"Thank thee, child;—oh, God, I thank thee!—I die in peace!" said the merchant, as his head fell back upon his pillow.

Never again was the merchant's soothing voice to address his child; never again was his honest right hand to touch her locks; never again was he to smile at her mirth;—never again! Even as he uttered the words, 'I die in peace,' he took his farewell of earthly joy and pain, ambition and defeat. He had lived them down.

* * * * *

They took John Bromhead, and laid him with his fathers in Battistow churchyard, burying him at the foot of the high tower that, standing upon the hill, looks down upon the river and the ferry and the Hollow House.

And softly went Martha about the desolate house, thinking of all that was good in the dead man, forgetting all of him that had ever given trouble to her anxious heart; thinking how he had lived down the sorrow of his first love for Adelaide Turrett, and then taken herself for his second love and only wife; thinking with bitter contrition how often she had been 'contrary' to him!

CHAPTER X.

EDGAR'S DISMISSAL.

JOHN BROMHEAD had said, "Before the grass is green on my grave at Battistow, the young Squire will in all probability receive his dismissal." Events followed in accordance with the prediction.

Leaving the work 'to finish itself,' Stephen Dowse and Martha said nothing to Carry on the subject of her engagement. For a few weeks after the merchant's death, Edgar Turrett continued his visits to Gray Street, persisting in the same tone which had already caused Carry so much pain. His words and manner betrayed nothing of heartlessness or positive levity; he spoke of her dead father with affection, and reverence, and sincere regret; but by looks and hints and silence (silence when she was yearning for the secrets of his heart) he made Carry believe that he was neither broken, nor softened, nor in any way altered, by the admonishments of death. He would not recognize her 'conversion,' but looking away from it repeated his former advice, that she should not be too

much cast down, that she should struggle against unreasonable dejection. And still she loved him,—more dearly the nearer they approached the time of parting. Oh, why had he not courage to shock her delicacy, as well as sense of right, by some flagrant act which should rouse in her gentle breast detestation of him, as well as pity? It occurred to him, resolved as he was that she should dismiss him, that it would be not less merciful than politic to convince her, by some extravagant outrage, that he was not merely irreligious, but hatefully depraved. In a moment of sad brooding, when John Bromhead lay dead in his house, he had determined that he would appear in the hunting-field, just as if nothing had happened to distress him. “Such an act,” he thought to himself, “would make her throw me off at once.” But he had not courage to show her such strange, stern mercy. He wished her to dismiss him as a worldly, irreligious man. He was not brave enough to make himself utterly hateful in her eyes. So the resolution was not acted upon; and Carry was left gazing at the waters of the great gulf that lay between her and the man she loved.

At length, after weeks of cruel anguish, and vain attempts to draw Edgar closer to her, the poor child wrote to him,—telling him, in gentlest way, that she dared no longer hope to be his wife. “Dear Edgar,” she finished her letter, “I have tried to spare you, in reading, the anguish I have felt in writing this wretched letter. Do believe it, I have nothing to charge you with,—no decrease of tenderness, no loss of excellence, no change whatever. It is I who have changed. Do not reproach me with it. Pardon me, and judge me mercifully. I am a feeble girl

in the hands of the All-powerful Creator, and Him I dare not offend. My conscience, by night as well as by day, assures me that I should be doing sin, if I promised, with God for witness, to 'obey' one who thinks as you do on those subjects to which I purpose to devote my life. But mind, dear Edgar, I do not judge or condemn you. Possibly, the Almighty Father who fashions His creatures with so great a variety of form and purpose, sees no more of good in the course I wish to take, than in the life you wish to lead. It may be so; for naturally we are all alike vile. But I must for *myself* see as He gives me light, do as He instructs, go whither He impels, believe what He teaches. Oh, then, dear Edgar, liberate me from my promise to you, and forgive me. Give me one line, saying that you forgive me."

She wrote the long letter (of which the above lines are only the conclusion) without letting fall a single tear on the paper; and when she had finished it, she took it to the post herself. She told neither her mother nor Fanny Magnum what she had done; nor did her demeanour for the rest of the day cause any suspicions that she had taken so great and terrible a step. At night, as she lay awake, her head was on a pillow wet with tears, and her heart was opened to the everlasting Comforter of human misery.

At the close of next day, she had Edgar's answer to her letter:—

"DEAR MISS BROMHEAD,"—(the young Squire wrote),
"Your letter causes me no new pain. Indeed the gentleness of it is a balm to wounds that have long been open. Not now for the first time do I recognize

the fact that I am not worthy to be your husband. For months past, the conviction of my inability to render you happy as my wife, although my love is what it ever has been, a knowledge that you felt we ought not to marry, and a fear that you would deem yourself irrevocably bound by your promise, have occasioned me much unhappiness. More than once I have been on the point of asking you to dismiss me, because of my certainty that our union would ere long prove your woe. Indeed, I have longed for your dismissal, while like a coward I dreaded it.

"I write to you in this tone of familiarity, because you permit me to do so.

"By the same messenger who brings you this note, you will receive all the letters and presents you have sent or given me. It will pain you to see them again ; but you ought to have them—to destroy.

"Dear Miss Bromhead, let me close this last letter with an expression of my gratitude to you for the manner in which you have conveyed to me your decision with regard to

"Your most sincere

"EDGAR TURRETT."

This letter, and the parcel which accompanied it, were given to Carry, whilst she was sitting with her mother after tea, in the old parlour where the reader first made the acquaintance of John Bromhead and his wife.

"The parcel is for you, my dear child," said Martha, in her customary plaintive tone.

"Yes, mamma," answered Carry, whilst her heart beat fast. "It comes from Castle Hollow."

"Indeed !"

Whereupon Martha continued to read a book, which Mr. Reeve had lent her.

With colourless cheek, Carry Bromhead sat for several minutes reading and re-reading Edgar's 'last note,'—the 'last note' she could ever hope to receive from him,—that 'last note' which made them henceforth strangers the one to the other.

"Mamma," Carry at length said.

"Yes, dear;—how is Mr. Edgar Turrett?"

"He is well, mamma," answered Carry, with composure, "but he will not come here again."

"Indeed! has he written to say so?" inquired the mother with surprise.

"I wrote to him, mamma," returned Carry, in unsteady tones—speaking quicker as she came to the conclusion of the sentence, "I wrote to him yesterday, telling him I dared not be *his*;—and he has written to set me free from my promise, and it's all over."

"My child! my child!" exclaimed Martha, stretching forth her hands. "Come to me. Your mother——"

But before Martha could give utterance to another word, Carry had abruptly left the room with her letter and her parcel.

"Poor child!" sighed Martha, folding her thin hands. "Yes, she had better be alone."

Yes, she was better alone; alone with God and the listening angels, who in the silence of many nights, since her father's death, had seen her stretch forth her hands and wring them in agony, and heard her cry, "I cannot lead him to you! I am blind, and weak, and helpless myself. I cannot lead him to you! It would be sin in me to try to lead him to you."

Martha sat without companion, till it was the time appointed for the evening prayers of the household;

when she read prayers, and dismissed her servants to rest.

"You can go to bed, Nancy, also," she said to her peculiar personal attendant. "Neither I nor Miss Bromhead will want you. She is not quite well, and I shall sit up with her."

"Had not I better sit up instead, ma'am?" said Nancy. "You are not strong, ma'am."

And in truth Martha looked far from strong, even for her small measure of strength. Her face was paler and thinner, and in every respect slighter than it had been for many a day before her husband's death. The white cap of widowhood, also, added to the feebleness and sadness of her appearance.

"Then, Nancy, sit in my room for awhile, till I come to you," returned the mistress, for the sake of keeping her servant quiet.

Having thus sent her attendants to rest, Martha took candle in hand, and went to her daughter's room,—that same room in which 'old Becky' used to pet and scold Carry when she was a child.

On the chief table of the room Martha found a candle burning dimly, and a litter of letters—the contents of the Castle Hollow parcel. On the bed she saw Carry, habited in her black dress, as she was when she abruptly left the parlour,—lying with her face turned towards the ceiling, and covered with her hands.

Noiselessly sitting down by the bed, Martha watched her darling, who, unaware of her mother's presence, was, with her face thus covered by her hands, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Carry, Carry," at length the mother exclaimed, all her affected firmness breaking down as she watched her only child's anguish, "speak to me, darling! When I

was a girl, long years ago, I suffered too. You wouldn't think it. But I did. Oh, Carry, let me into your heart. Don't keep me out of it."

Oh, mamma," answered Carry passionately to this touching appeal, throwing her arms round Martha's neck as she spoke, "I love him from the depths of my soul. I love him more than ever I did."

"But, darling, you love God better,—and He will reward you."

"Don't say so," cried the girl, with a fresh burst of weeping. "I dare not say so; I fear I love Edgar better than all else. May God help me!"

For many minutes Martha held her peace, counting her darling's sobs, and watching the tears as they rolled down her beautiful face.

"Darling," Martha said, when Carry had become calmer, "sooner or later we all have a sorrow to live down. My mother told me, when I was not much older than you, that 'Live it Down' would serve as a motto for the story of every human life. My days have not disproved the truth of her words. Neither did your father's. Carry, we are all born to sorrow, as the sparks fly upwards. You have only found the common lot, which God helps us to live down."

Martha spoke the truth.

But the lesson was not the less a sad one for the girl,—rich, lovely, and only nineteen years of age.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT RUMOUR SAYS, AND WHAT EDGAR TURRETT DOES.

How far the old Squire of Castle Hollow had ceased to be part of the living world may be seen from the fact that Edgar debated whether it would be worth while to rouse him from his apparent stupor, by informing him of Carry Bromhead's decision. "He will scarcely give heed to it if I tell him," thought the grandson, "and he is not likely to hear of it from other lips save mine. It will not be once in six weeks that any old friend of his will find his way to Castle Hollow, and even such a rare visitor will be met at the door with Tom's announcement that his master is not well enough to receive callers." Indeed, it had come to be understood, throughout that corner of the 'light lands,' that for social purposes the Hollow House had ceased to exist. For years Antony Turrett and his daughter had lived in strict seclusion, merely entertaining a small circle of old friends, which time steadily made smaller. Edgar had entered into society as a sport-loving bachelor, seeing his friends away from home, and never bringing them to

the Hollow House. Consequently the seat of the Turretts was seldom visited—indeed was scarcely known to exist, by the younger generation of the county ‘quality.’ Had not Adelaide Turrett and her gardeners expended so much care on the grounds and greenhouses, it would probably have been made the scene of goblin stories. Even as it was, people looked upon the house scarcely as a tenanted mansion, in a wild, unapproachable corner of the heath district. Possibly the young Squire, when he married John Bromhead’s heiress, would institute a new *régime*, and take his place (like the Turretts of former time) with the foremost gentry of the two counties. For the time being, however, but few persons of the superior sort living out of the immediate neighbourhood troubled themselves about the old home.

“Still,” thought Edgar, “it would be awkward if some old friend—such as General Naunton or Mr. Teesdale—were to break in upon the old man, and find him ignorant about my affairs, which, of course, will occasion plenty of gossip.”

So, one bright sunny morning towards the close of May, Edgar went to the library,—where his blind grandfather was sitting, head and knees together, over a fierce fire,—and, taking a seat by the veteran’s side, said, “Grandfather, I wish to speak with you about a matter of some importance.”

“Indeed,—indeed! what is it?” replied the other snappishly,—and with an appearance of alarm. “What is it? Speak out.”

“I don’t like to disturb you, sir,—as I know you prefer quiet to talking; but you may hear of it from some one else.”

“Who else, Edgar? Who else would think of talking to me of matters of importance? I see no one. I

will see no one. Surely a broken invalid, approaching four score years, may live alone, if he likes. But what is it, Edgar? Nothing about the tenants, eh? I have told you to settle everything with them, without troubling me. What is it?"

"My engagement with Miss Bromhead is broken off, dear grandfather."

"Bromhead? Bromhead?" muttered the old man. "Let's see,—she is the daughter of John Bromhead. Yes, yes,—Tom tells me that John Bromhead is dead, and that they've buried him over the water. Well, what were you saying? My memory gets weaker, Edgar. You shouldn't trouble me about business."

Greatly moved (for he had never before witnessed so strong a proof of the decay which was wearing out his grandfather's mind), Edgar explained, "Miss Bromhead declines to be my wife, sir. So, if ever I wish to marry, I am free to look out for a wife elsewhere."

"Ay,—ay. To be sure,—you were engaged to be married to her. Yes, yes, I remember now, I was very angry about it at first,—but poor Adelaide had set her heart upon it. So she has changed her mind, has she? —Well, is that all?"

"Yes, grandfather,—that's all!"

"But" (in a tone of perplexity)—"you *said* you were going to speak about something important?"

"That's all I wish to say, grandfather."

"Very good, very good! Then it's all over. Then just touch the bell for Tom. I want my broth, Edgar. You don't want to say anything more?"

"No, grandfather, nothing more!" answered Edgar, rising and leaving the room as 'ol' Tom' entered it.

Putting on a shooting-cap, the young Squire sauntered up and down the garden terrace, got rid of half an hour (inspecting the masons who were at work in the church, placing a memorial tablet, inscribed with the words 'Faithful unto Death, Faithful after Death'), smoked a cigar on the lawn, and then walked out with a favourite dog over the heath to the cliffs, along which he wandered for miles. It was no such great time since, when he took the same walk—building bright airy castles in the future,—when Carry would be his wife, and he would reign in Castle Hollow, with wealth and many friends—to make the hours go merrily.

What a gap between 'now' and 'then'!

Then pride of family and station inspired him; *now* he felt a sense of loathing come over him as he reflected on the ignominy of his extraction. *Then* he deemed himself the future husband of a girl good as she was beautiful, accomplished as she was good,—the only woman he had ever loved with lover's love; *now* he regarded the cheerless prospect of a solitary existence, without wife and without child. *Then* he was well pleased to be on the lips of men, as the lucky young Squire of Castle Hollow, who had won the hand of the richest heiress of the 'light lands'; *now* he smothered fury and shame in his breast when he thought how the world would speak of him if it knew *all that he knew*. *Then* he had looked forward to living, rich and honoured, on the ancestral estate where his forefathers had for generations resided in honour; *now* he was waiting until he should be able to lay his grandfather by Adelaide's side, when he would wipe the name of 'Turrett' from the roll of the 'light land' gentry, and seeking refuge in a country far away, beyond the

Atlantic waves, would bury his degradation so that none could find it.

In such a frame of mind, how could he do otherwise than long for the event which, while it brought enduring rest to the old man who was still living his secret down, would leave him free to carry out his resolution? But that event was not to come speedily.

For more than two years (from the spring of 1822 till the summer of 1824) Edgar Turrett had to remain at Castle Hollow after Adelaide's death, awaiting the close of his grandfather's joyless days. It was a period of such suffering as is hardest for strong men to bear. There was nothing he could do, for his own good or the good of others. His task was to wait the slow approach of death,—brooding over his shame, and wrongs, and utter wretchedness. At home he had no dearer or nearer companion than an aged, feeble, imbecile man, whose latest energies were concentrated on the task of keeping his grandson at a distance from him; away from home, he had no friend of whom he dared ask sympathy or counsel; no living creature to whom he could confide his secret.

The gloom of those two years no tongue can tell.

While Edgar was living them down, the cruel and the careless were busy with his name.

When it became known that his engagement with Carry Bromhead was broken off, there was very general feeling in the country round about Merton-Piggott, that the young Squire deserved his fate, and that Miss Bromhead deserved commendation for having had courage to dismiss a lover who, besides being a godless reprobate, and an associate of common black-legs, was bent on squandering his patrimony, and going

to rack and ruin. It would have been a thousand pities, if a girl so amiable, and lovely, and well endowed, had thrown herself and her fortunes away on such a worthless young man! Beyond his misfortunes, nothing had occurred to account for it; but from the time of his aunt's death, Edgar's reputation, over which clouds had for some time hung, fared worse and worse. Every gossip of the 'light lands' could say something to his disadvantage,—could tell with improvements what *had taken*, or with vague, mournful suggestions could give hints of what *would* take place.

All that Stephen Dowse knew, or thought he knew, to the young Squire's discredit, floated about the 'light lands,' from town to town, and from house to house; and every count in the bank-agent's heavy bill of indictment was varied, added to, multiplied, expanded, never diminished, by the ordinary processes of rumour, till simple people persuaded themselves that Edgar (whose gravest faults had been imprudence and hasty temper) was a perfect monster of iniquity. It was said that his aunt had enjoyed a handsome independence of several thousand pounds, until he had stript her of every penny of it. It was affirmed that at the old Squire's death the Castle Hollow estate would not be able to pay off the debts contracted by the young man. It was understood that a gang of King's Heath swindlers, of whom Alec Barber was one, had plundered him to the extent of £20,000. It was well known that when he had beggared his aunt, and given her her death-blow, he treated her with brutal neglect, never even coming near her in her last illness. It was even hinted that the old Squire was nothing more than his grandson's prisoner,—was strictly confined to the house, was kept constantly under the eyes of servants (who,

though they were 'servants' in name, were in reality 'keepers'), was not permitted to see the few old friends who called at the Hollow House, and vainly endeavoured to get sight of him. Of course, Miss Bromhead was right in casting such a hardened profligate from her side. The marvel was that she had ever been deluded into thinking him worthy of her.

Nor was Edgar left in ignorance of what the world thought of him.

He received letters from the more zealous and less prudent clergy and dissenting ministers of the 'light lands,' expostulating with him on his enormities, and urging him to repent. Through the post, also, he was addressed by other impertinent busy-bodies, who upbraided him for his offences, and in gentle Christian terms assured him that repentance would be of no avail to him, for that crimes such as his were unpardonable. At first Edgar was utterly at a loss to account for this burst of public indignation; but he was enlightened by the receipt of an anonymous letter, which, unlike the many other astonishing communications he had received, was worded in affectionate terms:—

"Dear sir," this unsigned letter ran, "I am your friend, and may still be able to help you. Alec Barber has raised money on the post-obit bond, the existence of which has by some means transpired to the general outside public, and has occasioned the absurd and malicious rumours about you. When Barber demands payment on the bond, refuse it. If he sues you, a witness will appear to prove that he has broken its conditions. In the meantime, keep a good heart in your breast. Make no answer to mere idle reports. Friends who know your trouble, and are bound to you

by the strongest ties of duty, are working for you. Heaven guard and bless you !”

The handwriting of this letter was a specimen of small, neat, accurate penmanship. Edgar had never seen it before, and the post-marks upon it afforded him no clue to its authorship. But, though he had an Englishman’s aversion to anonymous letters, he pressed it to his lips, saying, “ Thank God I have such friends ! But how can friends help me ? ”

It never occurred to him that the writer of the letter knew more of his trouble than such pecuniary embarrassments as the one to which allusion was made.

When the hunting-season of 1822-23 came round, the young Squire appeared in the fields and at the meets of the ‘ light land ’ sportsmen, as in former seasons. He went also into the corn-country, and rode in the steeple-chases. Nor did he abstain from showing himself at King’s Heath, and on the minor race-courses. He could not endure the dreary life of the Hollow House, where his grandfather was steadily sinking into deeper dotage,—where he had no companion except his servants, dogs, and horses.

So, whilst he was waiting for that event which would leave him at liberty to sell his estate and fly from his native land, he continued, as far as outward appearances were concerned, to lead much the same life as ever.

Even in sporting circles, however, he met signs of that evil repute which hung over his name. Though no one actually refused to hold intercourse with him, several of the leading sportsmen of the ‘ light lands,’ and squires of the ‘ corn-country ’ returned his greetings coldly and with stiffness. Invitations to hall and manor house were less numerous, and those that were

still given, in accordance with old usage, lacked the cordiality which in former years Edgar had experienced from his hospitable entertainers.

Knowing that the fact of his having given Alec Barber a post-obit bond had leaked out from the concealment in which he had endeavoured to keep it, Edgar Turrett was not surprised at the treatment he received from men whom he both liked and respected. He did not require to be told that the fact was one on which even those who were charitably disposed to him must necessarily put an unpleasant construction. It proved beyond question that he and a notorious rascal had had other dealings than those open ones of which the world had been tacitly invited to take notice. That alone was enough to cast a slur upon his character with men of nice honour. And in Edgar's breast there was a confidence, perhaps a mistaken, but not therefore a less firm belief, that if men of proud and gentle nature knew his real motives for giving Alec the bond, they would be even less inclined to greet him as familiar friend, than whilst he was merely an object of their vague suspicion. Moreover, Edgar was well aware that, according to the morality of the 'light land' gentry, to give a post-obit bond was to manifest a disposition to coldly calculate on the death of near kindred. The time was when he himself would have shuddered at the bare thought of such an act—when natural affection would have been stronger than selfish consideration, to restrain him from pawning his interest in property that would not be his till his dearly beloved grandfather was ready for the coffin.

Therefore he felt no personal indignation at the coldness or anger of the world. Regarding them only as minor ingredients in the cup of humiliation which he

was draining to its bitter dregs, he simply avoided those who seemed anxious to avoid him, and steered clear of every chance of hostile collision with old friends who wished no longer to be his friends.

Thus shunning others, even more than he was shunned, the young Squire, who had formerly been a general favourite for his frank tone and sociable temper, became taciturn and uncourteous. In the runs of hunting fields, he took as far as possible a line of his own, keeping away from his companions in sport, and rarely exchanging words with those whom he chanced to encounter. On race-courses, it was noticed that he no longer recognized the trainers and jockeys to whom it had formerly been his vanity to play the part of patron; and that when men of his own rank accosted him, his replies were usually curt, never conciliatory. It was remarked, too, that he changed not less in appearance than manner. His fresh colour and smile left him. The 'dark look' (which his college friends years back had noticed when his 'queer temper' was roused, and the 'rough side' of his nature was turned outwards) sat permanently in his eyes and on his brow; whilst the muscles of his pale, haggard, care-worn face assumed a settled, unvarying expression of fierce, defiant gloom.

Rumour accused him of drinking deeply at the taverns where he stayed to dine, during his companionless rides over the wild open 'light lands' or close 'corn country;' but rumour said many false things of him. Certainly he never drank with others, for he was no longer seen at the hunt-breakfasts and dinners. Even those who were most ready to speak slightly of him as one who 'would get drunk by himself,' admitted that he seemed none the less eager for the fierce excite-

ment of 'the chase.' To his old boldness as a rider he seemed to have added desperaterecklessness. "By ——!" cried Sir Carnegie Wright, the master of the Sproughton Hunt, in reference to one of the young Squire's exploits on the back of 'Black Baron,' "I believe he wishes to kill himself and his horse outright, and go to the devil in a clap of thunder. 'Old Harry' has stuck his fangs into him! That's clear." Nor was Sir Carnegie the only man to attribute the change in Edgar Turrett to Satanic influence! The farmers of the country between Merton-Piggott and the sea shook their heads mysteriously, and muttered that the young Squire of the 'Hollow House' was at war with the infernal Ruler; whilst superstitious peasant-women, whom Edgar passed in his lonely rides, or long unattended walks, eyed him askant, and when the day's toil was done went home to their cottages, to tell their good-men and children how they'd seen "the young Squire who'd sold himself to the Evil One," and how it was "a fearful thing to look upon him."

In such wise did Edgar Turrett wait for his grandfather's death,—living his secret down in his own country, until he could leave England, and—live it down in a new land.

In the summer of 1823, he remained at home, passing most of his days in pedestrian excursions over the sea-board heaths, visiting the villages that were hidden in the gullies of the cliffs, and returning home at late night—when utter weariness of body gave him hope of sleep. When the harvest of 1823 had been gathered in, he was again 'out,' riding in steeple-chases or following hounds.

At length, in the summer of 1824, death paid the visit, which had been so long delayed.

CHAPTER XII.

CARRY AND HER GUARDIAN.

DURING those same two years, whilst Edgar Turrètt was thus living his secret down, Carry Bromhead, at Merton-Piggott, with no less effort, and no less anguish, but in a very different way, was contending with her great sorrow,—dealing with that which Martha had assured her was the common lot of humanity.

Having overcome the first shock of her father's death, and the first sense of prostration which followed on the discharge of her stern duty to the man whom she loved with undiminished fervour, Carry set to work, meekly, devoutly, zealously, in that course which conscience and her spiritual adviser assured her was the only path, in which she ought to walk. As one, who had been converted and drawn away from the pursuit of mere earthly pleasures, she went forth on a new journey, labouring for those ends for which her 'conversion' had made her hope. In her last letter to Edgar, she said, "I do not judge or condemn you. Possibly the Almighty Father, who fashions His crea-

tures with so great a variety of form and purpose, sees no more of good in the course I wish to take, than in the life you wish to lead. It may be so ; for naturally we are all alike vile. But I, *for myself*, must see as He gives me light, must do as He instructs, must go whither He impels, must believe what He teaches." In this humble spirit, without parade and without self-confidence, she recommenced her task—of obeying her commander.

In most respects her life differed not essentially from the lives of the many heaven-devoted women who, in every generation of Britain's Christian history, have entered into God's service with all their strength. Early and late she laboured to do good to those who most needed such weak help as she could render them. She closed her eyes to earthly interests,—indeed, for the time being, had no such interests. Of herself she never thought, except when she was confessing her sins, examining the evil of her heart, deploring her frailties, endeavouring to render herself acceptable to the God whom she regarded as an ever-present observer of all her acts. Far from taking merit to herself for the excellence of her life, in moments of peaceful satisfaction, she merely trusted that she was showing her desire to be a Christian,—and very often she was weighed down with despondency, magnifying her shortcomings, and bemoaning her inability to be all that she ought to be.

Her intimate associates of her own rank were few,—fewer than they were during the brief period of her butterfly triumph at the Assembly Rooms. To her mother's heart she daily came closer. Fanny Magnum was the companion of her labours, and sharer of her hopes and fears. Mr. Reeve was her adviser, tutor, fellow-worker. Of her domestic companions, none

others came within her inner life. But to all others,—to her guardian, Stephen Dowse; to her father's old friends of the 'persuasion;' to the ladies of the Assembly Rooms;—she was as winning in manner, as considerate in thought, as eager to please, as ever she had been. "I must do my duty in small things as well as great," she continually reminded herself; and if she erred at all in her bearing to the world, her mistakes were made through a too great anxiety not to hurt the feelings of others.

Yet she lacked not courage in dealing with the world, though she paid such ample respect to the opinions and sympathies of all persons. What she felt to be her duty, that she did,—being so full of holy purpose, that she had no room in her mind for fear of idle, curious criticism. Perhaps, for one in whose heart an awful sorrow lay bedded, her life was the healthiest and happiest that could have been devised for her. It was a busy life. Her daily work in Mr. Reeve's school, her daily visits to the bedsides of sick women in the 'poor quarter,' her daily studies under the rector's guidance, left her no time for reflecting on old disappointments. Dr. Magnum watched her health narrowly, with the intention of restraining her, if he had reason to think that she exerted herself too much. But, keen observer though he was, he saw no need to speak a word of caution.

Though Carry heard them not, of course Merton-Piggott passed various judgments on the girl's 'new life.'

The old stagers of the Assembly Rooms opened their eyes wide, and smiled. The more charitable said, "She means it. It's all sincere. You see, it's in her blood. Her father was in the same sort of way before

her." The more flippant observed, "Well, I wish all saints were as young and pretty." The more prudent remarked, "Anyhow she has got rid of that good-for-nothing fellow, young Turrett. If she had married him, her money wouldn't have been safe. As to her soul,—that's another question." Mr. Counsellor Gnatt put in tart reminder, "That unmarried rector is at the bottom of it; and she—if she wasn't such a lovely, winning little thing,—I should call her as clever a little minx as ever breathed. She knows which way the world is going."

Over his evening grog, Carry's guardian said to Mrs. Dowse, "It can't be right, my dear. The girl is every bit as bad as her poor mother, who never could understand that moderation is a virtue—even in church-going. She is going it a great deal too strong, and yet I don't like to tell her so,—though John Bromhead left me her guardian, which is about the wisest step poor John ever took in all his life. Rest his soul! It was never intended that a young lady of her property should live as if there was nothing to be done in the world, except teaching a pack of pauper brats, and catching fevers, and the Lord knows what else, in all the worst alleys of the town. That sort of zeal was all very well in the times of the early Christians, when true religion was a new thing, and had to fight its way. But now that it is firmly established, there's no call for ordinary people to make martyrs of themselves. Bless me, what are the churches and clergy for, but to do all that sort of business for us? She is going it a great deal too strong! I declare, Mrs. Dowse, she might almost as well be a dissenter at once. And I am sure I had enough trouble in pulling poor Martha and her child out of that scrape!" (The scrape thus alluded to being the 'persuasion,')

from which 'scrape' Stephen Dowse flattered himself that he had rescued his ward and her mother).

To which, easy-going Mrs. Dowse replied, "Oh, leave her alone, Stephen. She knows what is best for herself. I am sure she's a right good girl, and isn't a bit stuck up, though she has such a sight of money. Religion may just now turn her heart rather too much to heaven, but nobody can say it turns her nose up also. Let well alone, Stephen. For my part, I don't think a girl can have too much religion, and I wish I had had more of it when I was young. It's just like colour in a new dress, Stephen—time'll take it out. And who knows but that she may please the rector all the more for it; and if they should hit it off, why, I am sure, Stephen, nothing could suit better."

This was a new thought for Stephen Dowse, and it appeared to him so far above the ordinary range of Mrs. Dowse's suggestions, that he condescended to reply, "Who put that notion into your *mind*? Somebody must have been talking to you."

"Lord bless you, husband!" answered good-natured Mrs. Stephen, "I haven't got a *mind*; I am only a woman; but a woman has a keen scent for that sort of mischief. A weather-cock hasn't got a mind, but it can tell you which way the wind is blowing, surer and sooner than you, with all your mind, can find out by wetting your finger."

Stephen Dowse was so impressed with the wisdom of this answer that he smoked his pipe in silence for full five minutes, meditating on what he had heard; at the end of which time he laid his 'churchwarden' down, and, having taken a liberal drink of grog, smacked his lips, and observed emphatically, "I'll tell you what, Mrs. Dowse,—it would make a splendid account!"

"What are you thinking of, Stephen?—whose account?"

"Why, their account, to be sure," replied Mr. Dowse, testily. "Reeve, Bromhead, and Co.; that is to say, if they should hit it off. Of course, I should keep their money,—as her guardian."

Whereat Mrs. Dowse put a plump hand on each side of her not small waist, and laughed out heartily.

Thinking that he had been unbending somewhat too freely to his wife, the bank-agent bridled up, and checking the laughter by a glance, which his wife never failed to obey, observed "There, that's enough laughing for the present, Mrs. Dowse; and you will be pleased to be very careful not to breathe a syllable of what has just passed between us. Possibly, your thought is no new one to me; and possibly, for that very reason, I don't wish it to be repeated or countenanced by you. As the wife of Stephen Dowse, madam, you must be close;—yes, madam, you must be close."

This conversation took place when John Bromhead had been dead rather more than a year; and it had such an effect on Carry's guardian that, instead of proceeding to expostulate with her on her excessive zeal in the pursuit of godliness, he displayed an increase of sympathy with her opinions and labours. For the bank-agent was well pleased with Mrs. Dowse's plan for his ward's settlement. The rector of Merton-Piggott was necessarily a person of leading importance in the town and neighbourhood; he was also rich, and steadily becoming more popular. Apart from the pleasure he would feel in making out to Messrs. Crabtree, Scuttle, and Co., that the 'splendid account' was an affair of his own personal influence, Stephen Dowse judged that

his own dignity in the town-club and the Assembly Rooms (to which he and his wife had at length gained admission) would be increased by such an alliance. Indeed, he was so gratified with the prospect, that he was impelled to sound Martha on the subject. But with a strong effort he stifled the impulse; and, deciding that he would be 'close as an oyster' on the subject for some while to come, he did not trouble the serene gladness which Martha now experienced in her child.

He had not long come to this wise conclusion, when an occurrence encouraged him to persevere in his policy of 'closeness.'

Sitting, one morning, in Martha's parlour, and entertaining her with selections from the gossip of the town, Mr. Dowse observed, "I am afraid the young Squire of Castle Hollow isn't going on any better. Everybody is talking about his debts; and they say he has taken to drinking. Sad thing, Martha!—sad thing!"

"Don't talk about him, cousin," sighed Martha. "I can pray for him, but I can't bear to talk about him!"

"I don't want to gossip about him, Martha. It is not Stephen Dowse's way to gossip. But the thought of the young Squire has been put uppermost in my mind by a rumour that met me yesterday,—that the Castle Hollow estate is to be sold as soon as the old Squire dies. Very likely it's true."

With these words the agent intended to quit the subject; but it was not to be so disposed of, for at that moment entering the parlour by a door which, owing to a screen being placed before it, Stephen Dowse did not know to be standing half-open, Carry caught the conclusion of the last sentence.

"What is that, guardian? Castle Hollow to be sold?" inquired Carry, quickly.

"Ay, so they say," returned Stephen, startled by the sudden appearance of his questioner. "Only a rumour;—there may be nothing in it."

"Does rumour say why it is to be sold?"

"To pay off the young Squire's debts."

"His debts!" repeated Carry, the colour coming quickly into her face, and as suddenly departing—"his debts!—will he be poor?"

"I am afraid so. He has lost a great deal of money through horse-racing."

Without another word Carry left the room, and went to Mr. Reeve's schools, whither she was bound when (habited in her walking-dress) she stepped into the parlour to give Martha a passing look.

It was hard work that day for Carry to keep her thoughts fixed on her pupils.

The next day, when Stephen Dowse made his customary mid-day call in Gray Street, Carry led him to the drawing-room (which had, since her father's death, been assigned to her as a private apartment), and, having invited him to sit by her side on the sofa, caused him profound and lively astonishment.

"Guardian," she asked, in a low, troubled voice, "is Mr. Edgar Turrett really so poor that he will have to part with his estate? Is the report true?"

"I am afraid so, my dear. But why should you trouble your head about the matter? He is not the first young man who has lost wealth through—through—well, through imprudence."

"He is greatly in debt, then? There is no doubt about that?"

"None," said the agent firmly, "none whatever. I *know* he is greatly in debt."

"Then, guardian, he must have half my fortune," replied Carry, in a wavering voice, but not less firmly, "just as if he had married me."

"Heaven bless you, child!" exclaimed Stephen Dowse, opening his eyes in utter amazement, "you must be little better than mad!"

"No, dear,—I am not mad, I am only in earnest."

"Carry," said the guardian, after a pause, "I have no power to give away your money. Neither can you part with it,—till you are five-and-twenty. By the time you are that age, you'll know Mr. Edgar Turrett so well, you wont wish to help him. Indeed, dear cousin Carry,—he is a very bad, worthless young man."

"If he is bad now, he was not so once, guardian," answered the girl in a solemn tone, and with pathetic emphasis. "If he be, really and indeed, a wicked man, it is I who have made him so. Oh, may God pardon me! I did what I believed to be my duty."

"Tut,—tut,—my good girl; he had gone wrong long before you dismissed him, and fortunately got free from him. Had I not known him to be a really bad fellow, I should have been less pleased than I was, when you parted with him. Come, I will tell you something about him which you ought to know, as you are wasting pity upon him. Before his poor aunt died, he wrung from her every penny of money she possessed. Poor lady, it was that as much as anything else, that killed her!"

Carry shuddered; but she had courage to say, "I don't believe it."

"Don't believe me!" answered Stephen Dowse, with a smile of amusement. "Why, child, shortly after the young Squire had met with heavy losses at King's Heath, poor Miss Turrett came to my office, and drew

out £1200—drew out all she had. It was just when she began to fail in health. She was ill,—and staying at Bassingbourne House.—Don't you believe me now?"

"No," answered Carry, her eyes flashing indignantly, and her whole appearance suddenly changing, as she rose from the sofa, and looked down at her guardian angrily. "No;—it's a calumny,—a wicked calumny; and I can prove it!"

"You prove it!—so?—You can't prove that I didn't give the money to the lady!"

"I know you gave her the money.—I knew it on the very same day when she took it out of the Bank."

"Indeed!—how came you to know of it?"

"Poor dear Miss Turrett told me of it herself. She had intended to spend the money on a wedding present for me; and when she applied it to another purpose, she told me in confidence what that purpose was—begging me to approve of what she did. Dear woman, she seemed to think I had a sort of right in the money, as she had planned to spend it for my gratification."

"What did she do with the money?"

"She gave it to an old friend who had fallen into poverty;—an old friend whom she knew before Edgar was born. She told me so,—and asked me not to mention the matter to any one. So, of course, my lips have been sealed."

"Did she tell you the 'old friend's' name?"

"No."

"Well!—it is very strange!"

"It's very strange, and very sad," answered Carry, patting her foot indignantly on the floor, "that such an occurrence should be made the foundation of a base, wicked calumny on an honourable gentleman who

loved his aunt as tenderly,—yes, as tenderly as sons love their mothers.”

Stephen Dowse was perplexed. If it was still not quite clear to him that he had been at fault in the hasty inference which he had drawn from Miss Turrett's conduct with regard to her account, it at least seemed to him more than probable that he had made a mistake. Such an admission necessarily troubled him. Not that his conscience was uneasy because he had used the blunder as a means for aspersing another man's character; not that he was pained at the consequences of the error to Edgar's reputation. Mr. Dowse's first sense of perturbation was of a very different sort. That he, Stephen Dowse, should have been mistaken, was in itself (apart from the mistake's results) the primary cause of his perplexity. He could not account for it. He had never made a mistake before. Stephen Dowse was a close, sure man; and close, sure men do not make mistakes. How was the slip to be accounted for? If such slip should be repeated, he would lose faith in himself. If he lost faith in himself, whom should he believe in?

Moreover, Stephen Dowse was frightened;—frightened at the sudden change in his ward's voice, aspect, and manner.

He had become so accustomed to her gentle, meek, subdued cheerfulness, that her flashing eyes and angry tone, and the excitement with which she patted her little foot on the drawing-room carpet, almost scared him out of his wits. It was clear that she was not less capable of rebellion under sense of wrong than of submission under sense of duty. She had called—and with some appearance of justice, too—the statement of his (Stephen Dowse's) lips, a ‘base, wicked

calumny.' The next step for her to take would be to call him (her guardian, and the chief agent of Crabtree, Scuttle, and Co.) a 'base, wicked calumniator.' What should he, in such case, reply? If she went into flat, open rebellion, what should he say? what *do*? Hitherto he had been prodigiously proud of his office of guardian, and had entertained a general and very vague notion that it invested him with legal powers to snub Carry, scold her, twit her, place her in solitary confinement, put her on spare diet, inflict back-boards on her, and proceed to extremities awful to contemplate, if she should presume to set his authority at defiance, or treat his opinions with contempt. But now, at the first act of contumacy, he was powerless to justify himself, or—crush her.

Stephen had always flattered himself that he was a consummate master of the arts by which human creatures are managed. He had always found it easy work to govern his clients, especially when they were in difficulties. The men who entered his bank-parlour asking for loans, for renewals of bills, for accommodation, were always submissive, pliant, obsequious. He could rule them; and now, for the first time in his life, he fully appreciated the fact that they were not ruled by him, but by the money of which he had the command. But Carry was a very different sort of subject. He had no promissory notes of hers in his strong chest.

What should he do? He couldn't trample upon her as he was wont to trample on Timothy Tiltot at the town-club. He couldn't threaten to sell her up. He couldn't bully her as he could bully faint-hearted Martha. It was not a case for calling in the parish constable;—the fire-engines wouldn't help him. Stephen had a superstitious belief in the efficacy of ad-

vertisements inserted in the county papers as a means for simplifying the complications of business. But here was a case in which newspaper advertisements could not be employed with advantage.

The guardian could not leave the room without saying something.

In justice to him, it must be admitted that when he at length spoke, he did so to good purpose.

Adopting a conciliatory tone, he expressed regret for his error, regret that he should have spoken harshly and unjustly of a gentleman for whom he at one time entertained a high regard. He was glad to hear that Mr. Edgar Turrett could be cleared of blame as far as Miss Turrett was concerned. He should be only too glad to find out that he could as easily be cleared of the heavy debts which he (Stephen Dowse) knew had been contracted by the heir of Castle Hollow.

Having thus prepared the ground for further disclosures, the agent went on to tell his ward all he knew,—narrating to her the particulars of the sums borrowed by Edgar at Sedghassock, and of the bond which the young Squire had given to Alec Barber.

“So, my dear girl, you see,” observed the guardian, at the conclusion of his revelations, “I had some reason—at least, I have some excuse—for taking an unfavourable though mistaken view of Miss Turrett’s withdrawal of her account from my bank. Of course, I have no pleasure in thinking badly of my fellow-creatures;—what enjoyment could I possibly derive from such a source? Since I knew the young Squire was deeply involved, I naturally came to the conclusion that he had made away with his aunt’s money; and since her health broke up, just about the same time that she parted with her money, I as naturally inferred that his embarrass-

ments had preyed upon her spirits, and undermined her constitution."

Mr. Dowse did not see the good of confessing that the view taken by him about Miss Turrett's money had been so taken before he was acquainted with the young Squire's involvements.

"Still, guardian, you were wrong," answered Carry, much appeased by his explanation, and resuming her seat by his side.

"Yes, yes, I was wrong. I grant that."

"Then, dear, dear cousin, let the knowledge of your one mistake disincline you to be a severe judge of Mr. Turrett on other matters. You do not know the reasons he had for giving that bad man so much money.—Why, then, attribute the worst possible reasons?"

"Well, well, I wont be uncharitable. I will think the best of him. There, Carry, wont that satisfy you?" answered Stephen Dowse, affected by the pleading tone of the girl's last words, and greatly anxious to make his peace with her.

"And," continued Carry, renewing her first entreaty, "you will help me to set him free from his difficulties?"

The guardian fidgeted in his chair.

"You see, dear guardian," added Carry, "I only ask you to let me do what I like with my own money."

"But no part of what you call *your* money will be really *your own* till you are five-and-twenty.—And surely you don't think Mr. Turrett would condescend to accept a vast sum of money from you? If you do, you think worse of him than your guardian does!"

"That's why I want your help," was the answer.

"*We must liberate him from his debts, in such a manner that he can never discover to whom he is indebted for his liberation.*"

"This isn't fairy-land, child," rejoined the guardian, whose astonishment momentarily increased. "Heaven protect me!—one would think you spent all your time in reading silly romantic novels, and such rubbish."

"Oh! never mind what *one might* think of me," returned Carry, with a smile. "*One might* think me a wayward, spoilt child,—and make no great mistake either."

Stephen was silent for a couple of minutes.

When he next spoke, he cleverly postponed a final refusal to co-operate in Carry's project, by saying,

"Well, my beauty, anyhow, there is no such need of haste. I'll not forget your wish; indeed, I am not likely to be careless of any wish of yours. So I'll think about it. Anyhow, the proper time for action hasn't come yet. When the old Squire is dead, and Castle Hollow is advertised for sale, it'll be the right time for us to see what we can do."

"Oh! thank you, guardian,—thank you!" exclaimed Carry, kissing his hand.

"Come, then, let's make a compact," returned the agent. "You promise not to trouble me about this matter so long as the old Squire lives, and I'll promise not to forget your wish. There, do you agree?"

After brief reflection, Carry answered,

"Yes, dear cousin, I agree,—I promise."

Whereupon Stephen Dowse, with a delightful sense of relief, rose from the sofa, and prepared to take leave.

Before he opened the door, he remembered to caution

Carry not to repeat what he had told her about Edgar's debts and obligations.

"It's true they are common talk," observed the agent, "but it will never do for people to say that I let out secrets confided to me. It's my rule to be a 'close man.'"

"There's no fear that I shall talk about them," answered Carry with unusual sadness.

Then Stephen Dowse bade his ward farewell, and went back to his bank.

As soon as she was alone once more, Carry hastened to her bed-room, and having locked the door fell upon her knees, and asked God to pardon her sin in giving way to angry feelings when her guardian spoke slightly and cruelly and unjustly of the man whom she loved—far more than when she first promised to be his wife. "Oh! dear father," she made entreaty, "for Christ's sake pardon me! Look mercifully on my evil nature,—help me to 'live it down!'"

And whilst Carry was thus employed, Stephen Dowse sat in his bank-parlour meditating on his interview with his ward.

"I do verily believe," said the agent to himself, "she'd marry him still, if he'd only turn religious. Women are all of 'em queer customers, and the younger they are the queerer they are. I can't fancy why on earth they weren't made like men. What a lot of trouble the world would have been spared! To think of her wanting to fling away her money on that scamp,—who, after all, I do verily believe *did* clutch his aunt's savings. Likely enough, Miss Turrett only told Carry a pious fib (that's what women call a lie) about the matter. Ah! John

Bromhead was right when he said that if we told her about the young Squire's debts, we should only make her determined to stick to him through thick and thin. By Cræsus! I am afraid she'll give me some trouble,—that I am! Stephen Downe hasn't often met his match, but I'm hanged if I don't think she'll be a tussler. If I had her here in my parlour, all by myself, I think I could manage her. But I can't fight her on her own ground. She is such a devilish pretty little minx too!"

In the evening, as it was not a club-night, Stephen Dowse sat at home, reading what the learned Sir William Blackstone, Knt. says about the relations of "*Guardians and Wards*," "*Parents and Children*," "*Trustees and Cestui que trusts*." And greatly confused was the student, when he laid aside the jurist's writings, on receiving intimation that supper had been waiting for him for more than half an hour. How far he bore official resemblance to the *tutor* and *curator* of Roman law; whether he was a guardian *by nature*, or *for nurture*, or *in socage*, or by *common law*, or in *chivalry*, or by *statute*, or by *testament*, or otherwise; and if otherwise, how otherwise; whether Carry was in the eye of the law an *infant*, or an *idiot*, or a *lunatic*; how far she could *aliene*, and under what circumstances she couldn't *aliene*; in what cases the Lord Chancellor would help him, Stephen Dowse, to keep firm rein on his ward, and in what case the Lord Chancellor wouldn't;—were all of them points on which the agent was so troubled and ignorant, that he was more than half resolved to 'take counsel's opinion' on each and every of them. Indeed, such was his condition of alarm and obfuscation, that he regarded his ward with much the same feelings as a

maiden lady (of advanced years and extreme gentility) would entertain towards a young boa-constrictor, brought to her by the Parcels' Delivery Company, together with an injunction that she should rear it to maturity, or suffer extreme social degradation. In brief, Mr. Dowse wished that his ward was at the bottom of the Red Sea.

A substantial supper, and a stiff tumbler of hot brandy and water, however, restored the guardian's nerve and courage and common sense.

"After all, matters may work smother than I fear," mused Mr. Dowse. "If they don't,—why —why—*I'll call in the doctor!*"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RECTOR'S OFFER.

OUTWARDLY, Carry Bromhead, from the summer of 1823 till that of 1824, persisted in the same manner of life in which she had walked from the time of her father's death till the day when she heard of Edgar's embarrassments, and of the probability that Castle Hollow would pass from the hands of the Turretts, on the demise of old Squire Antony. But in the secret corners of her heart there worked feelings which were little suspected by those who watched most closely her career of self-denial, and charity, and unobtrusive piety. Whenever she rested for a minute from her self-imposed tasks of Christian labour, and often when she appeared most busy and absorbed in them, Edgar Turrett was present to her mind. Morning, and noon, and night his name was mentioned in her prayers, and in the hours of darkness she lay awake thinking of him. She kept her promise to her guardian, and never spoke to him of her generous plan for setting the young Squire free from his debts ; but her brain ever and

again was devising schemes by which that plan might be carried into effect when the appointed time for action came. She knew the evil that men were speaking of him—knew it from stray hints thrown out by the curious and prying; knew it from chance speeches, not intended for her ears; knew it from the sudden silences of considerate friends, who held their peace when she approached. She heeded it, but never made reply; she writhed under it, but never believed it. Idle gossip, reckless scandal, malicious slander, could not alter him to her—could only alter her to him, by strengthening her belief in his courage, simplicity, truthfulness, manliness.

Thus life went with Carry for full twelve months, until (her father having been dead more than two years) she laid aside her black mourning raiment, and appeared once more in attire the colours of which were far brighter than her heart.

When she made this change of costume, Merton-Piggott began to say it was full time for Miss Bromhead to be thinking about a husband. Rich and pretty, an heiress, with her property in possession (not in expectation), it could not be that she would live single all her days. It was true that she had been once in love; but all the world knew that, far from undergoing a disappointment of affection in that affair, she had sent the horse-racing young Squire of Castle Hollow about his business, because she had ceased to care for him. True it was, she was very religious; but it was not wicked to fall in love and be married. Even the most zealous of religious people entered the sacred estate of matrimony. Of course, she must have a very pious husband—one who would not only permit, but would encourage her to per-

severe in her exemplary career. Where should such a husband be found?

To which question Merton-Piggott answered by looking at the windows of the rectory, and saying how suitable a match Mr. Reeve would be for John Bromhead's daughter. He was rich, and therefore, in accordance with the fitness of things, ought to marry an heiress. He was very good, and therefore would marry none but a very good woman. It was true that he was considerably her senior; but girls are well known to make age of small moment when they set their affections on clergymen. There was no doubt that Martha Bromhead would be delighted with such an arrangement. It was even suspected by some that the sad woman was actually looking forward to it, and scheming for it. Moreover, Mr. Reeve was in constant intercourse with the heiress—was her almoner, spiritual guide, admired teacher, close friend. On the other hand, what unmarried man, besides the rector, was there for a moment to be proposed as a likely match for her? Since she had ceased to attend the Assembly Rooms, she had withdrawn herself from every chance of making a more advantageous alliance—that is to say, more advantageous in respect of years. Mr. Reeve's curates were all of them married men. The sons of her father's old friend, Richard Camberwell, were clearly out of the question; they made professions of piety, indeed; but they were merely tradesmen, and still adhered to the 'persuasion;' whereas, Miss Bromhead was, of course, destined for something better than a tradesman's wife, and had moreover become a zealous member of the Established Church.

People of all sets, and parties, and grades made up their minds that Carry Bromhead would ere long be-

come Mrs. Spencer Reeve. Mr. Counsellor Gnatt reminded his friends that "he had always said so." The school-teachers averred that "it must be so," and that "it would be delightful." Mrs. Dowse put her plump hands on her not slender waist, and, looking with exultation at her agent, asked, "Now, Stephen, what do you say?"—whereto Stephen Dowse merely responded, "Well, Mrs. Dowse, we shall see. Mind, I don't say I disagree with you; but just remember this, that Stephen Dowse doesn't see that it's all a matter of plain sailing." But Stephen gave not a hint of his reasons for this cautious reply; for Stephen Dowse was a close man—close and sure.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Camberwell went with the prevailing current of public opinion.

"To think of all that property going out of the persuasion!" observed Richard Camberwell to his censorious wife, smiting his thigh-bones with his bony fists so that they rattled like castanets, "to think of all that property going out of the 'persuasion,' when here are my two boys not yet suited with wives!—How can you account for it, Mrs. Richard?"

"Pride, my dear, pride; that's how I account for it!" answered Mrs. Camberwell.

"Not Miss Carry's pride; she's as meek, compliant a little soul as ever lived."

"May be, may be. The more the wonder, if she is! 'Like father like son, like mother like daughter!'—that's a good old rule, Richard; and Martha Bromhead is chuck full of Dowse pride. I never could abide her. She's a deep 'un!"

"Come, come, Mrs. Richard, be gentle on the poor woman, in consideration of all she has gone through with. She was always a pining, delicate critter."

“Fiddlesticks, with delicacy! You’re no better than a casuistical emissary to go making right wrong in that way! What had a delicate constitution to do with the way she lived with her fellow-believers all the time she professed ‘persuasion’ principles? Considering her property, and the size of her house, did she ever show even a desire to do her duty? Why, husband, I could count up on my fingers all the pieces of bread-and-butter I’ve had in her house, all the days I have known her; and if I took the sum total of all the cups of tea I have had at her expense, may I be a cast-away and join the establishment, following her perverted steps, if five would go into ‘em once!”

“There, there, Mrs. Richard,—I know all that!” interposed the husband, whose affection for his dead friend inclined him to think the best of those whom John Bromhead had left behind him.

“Then why waste pity on her?” inquired the wife, with increasing warmth and asperity, “a pining, delicate critter, indeed!—all I know is, she pined and delicated her husband into an early grave. Good, honest gentleman, he bore up bravely, and wouldn’t own it to the world; but I know what a worrit she was! If it hadn’t been for that woman, Richard, (with her Dowse pride, and her pining and worriting) one of our boys would have had Miss Carry, and her money to boot. She’s *all pride*. First, pride made her give up her only child to Mrs. Magnum, so that she might be led out into the Assembly Rooms, and offered for sale to the highest bidder, like any black slave in the United Merrikers. Much good the poor girl got in that market. But Mrs. B.’s pride was gratified by seeing her daughter bound over to marry a horse-racing, gambling sot of an infidel! What happens next to pride? An unmarried

rector comes into the town. And forthwith Mrs. B. worrits her husband into leaving the persuasion, and joining the establishment, for the sake of catching the unmarried rector! I know the woman, Richard. She's a Dowse to the back-bone!"

Whilst Merton-Piggott was thus busy with her name, Carry Bromhead, little imagining the good and the evil that were said of her and her mother, went on in obedience to the voice within her. It never occurred to her to regard the rector otherwise than as a most devout, and eloquent, and zealous clergyman, who, in the discharge of his duties to rich as well as poor, was good enough to devote much care to her spiritual guidance.

Never for a single moment had the possibility that he would wish to make her his wife crossed her mind; when, one balmy summer's morning, shortly after she laid aside her black dresses,—to her great alarm, and unutterable surprise,—he fulfilled one part of the expectations of his parishioners by making her an offer.

The rector made the proposal by word of mouth in Carry's pleasant drawing-room, through the open windows of which appeared the old tree-garden and skirt-ing avenue in which she had so often walked with Edgar.

For some few minutes, which seemed to the good clergyman as many hours, Carry was powerless to make any reply,—such was her astonishment.

At length, with tears of sorrow starting from her eyes, she told the rector that his hope was beyond attainment.

"Dear, dear Mr. Reeve," she said, "how grieved,—how humbled,—how wretched I am! If I could but have foreseen how you intended to honour me, I would have been more open with you. I would have saved

you the—the trouble of so speaking to me. But, indeed, I have never for an instant imagined that you could deem me worthy of such regard.”

“If it be a new thought, Miss Bromhead, take time to reflect upon it. I can wait patiently for your answer,—for months,—for years. Do only consider my petition. At present, I will not even ask for leave to hope.—But I *will* hope!”

“Do not,” Carry answered, with a flood of tears. “It would be useless. Indeed, you may not hope. I am not free to love you,—I am not free.”

“Then, indeed, I have to ask your pardon for so disturbing you. I need not assure you that I did not know you were engaged, or even likely to be engaged to another.”

“I am not,” Carry answered with a strong effort to recover her composure, “I am not engaged,—or likely to be engaged. But still I am not free.—Oh, Mr. Reeve, do not leave me. Stay with me, for a minute. I will tell you more,—all. You must know all. You will not be less good to me. You will pity me,—be merciful to me,—and help me to do my duty.”

Resuming the seat from which he had risen, Mr. Reeve waited till Carry was able to continue her communications. The grave concern expressed in his calm face was for her, not for himself.

“When you first came to Merton-Piggott, I was engaged—you know that,” said Carry, as soon as she was again able to speak.

“Yes, my dear Miss Bromhead,—to Mr. Turrett, of Castle Hollow. I was aware of that. I am aware also that you dismissed him.”

“I dismissed him,” said Carry, repeating the words, “I dismissed him,—but——”

"Surely, Miss Bromhead, you are not bound by considerations for one whom you deliberately decided to be unworthy of you."

Extending her right hand, and placing it in that of her companion, Carry answered, "Mr. Reeve, I love him still. I never loved him more dearly than I did, when I told him that I dared not be his wife. Oh, it is not wrong for me to love him. Do say it is not wicked of me,—do say that."

"Poor child!" said the rejected suitor with genuine pity, laying aside the lover's and assuming the father's tone, "you are not to be censured because you endure the bitterest of all sufferings. It is not wrong: but it is very sad."

"It would be far sadder to me, Mr. Reeve, if I did not love him. For now, I can still hope that God will one day bring him to me. Without that hope I could not live,—at least, I could make no exertion to be good."

He did not assure her that her hope was vain, though he felt it to be so; he did not implore her no longer to ask of Heaven that which to human eyes appeared impossible,—for he knew that nothing was beyond the power of Him to whom she made constant entreaty; he did not renew his entreaty that the heart—which could love so deeply and completely, and yet sacrifice itself at the altar of duty—would turn away from the object of its misplaced tenderness, and rest on him,—for in sympathy for her woe he had forgotten his own.

"On his deathbed, with his last breath," continued Carry, speaking more calmly, but with no less pathos, "papa begged me to promise him that I would never become the wife of any man whose religious opinions I knew to differ from my own. I made him the promise,

and he answered, 'I thank thee, child,—oh, God, I thank Thee! I die in peace!' They were his last words. As he spoke them, he died. And I have done what my promise implied. If the promise had not been made, I hope I should have been strong enough to do the same. I waited till I felt sure that I should have to wait very—very long—ere Edgar would think as I do. Then, for *his* sake, not my own, I asked him to liberate me from my promise; and he set me free—nobly, generously, tenderly—with strong love for me in his parting words. Do you remember, Mr. Reeve, a sermon you once preached from the text, 'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee?' Do you remember it? Oh, you must needs remember it?"

"I remember it well," answered the clergyman, recalling to his mind also that in the delivery of that same sermon he had within the range of his thoughts the trial and danger of the girl who thus questioned him,—who then seemed in danger of becoming a bad man's wife.

"You said the 'right eye' meant our dearest and tenderest affection; that the 'offence' of such affection, innocent in itself, might be found in its circumstances when they were such, that to gratify it would be to voluntarily encounter temptation to evil, without the hope of doing good; and you said that where such circumstances existed, it was the Christian's duty to remove from his life the possibility of being led into the indulgence of the affection. You explained that it was the effort to remove this possibility which Christ pointed at when he used the words, 'Pluck it out.'"

"I did. My dear girl, I said so."

"But you told us that when the Christian had secured himself from the possibility of being led into sin

by the object of his love, he might still retain it in the sanctuary of human affection,—might still indulge tender emotion for all the good of it,—might pray for the death of those evil circumstances that surrounded it,—might hope at some distant period, even in this life, to be united with it,—might look forward to full and perfect companionship with it in another world. You said that?”

Again the clergyman assented.

“Oh, dear sir,” added Carry, “that hope is a great comfort to me when the hours of my life are dark. I still hope that Edgar will be *brought* to me. I must always love him,—but, with dear God’s help, I will not let my love lead me into temptation. Dear sir, I tell you this, because I would have you see *how* I trust you,—*how* I love you,—though I can never love you so as to become your wife.”

“Child,—dear child,” returned the rector, with the emotion of a man gentle and brave as he was good, “(for, henceforth I must ever look upon you as my child, since I may not hope to call you ‘wife’) you regard me as your teacher and guide;—but you have given me a lesson—which shows me my own weakness,—but which I trust will endow me with greater strength.”

He said no more.

Without another word he rose, and passing through the open French window of the drawing-room moved across the old tree-garden,—where sunshine and shade, and the scent of the bright flowers, and the green freshness of the lawn, and the singing of many birds, and the murmur of happy insects, had no discord for the sorrow of his stirred heart.

He went away, resolving to think yet more of others, and still less of himself. He went away, thanking the

Creator for having endowed good women with mysterious strength. He went away, questioning whether he had done well in helping to restrain love—so pure, and sacred, and strong as that which Carry bore to Edgar—from close communion with its object. He went away, thinking that the young Squire,—of whom he had been wont to speak sternly, on whom he now mused generously,—might even yet be converted, and changed to a new man, if Carry's love were with him, clothing him like a garment.

At the close of that day, when Martha Bromhead had read evening prayers to her household, and dismissed her servants to rest, Carry lingered with her mother for a few minutes in the parlour, and, as she kissed her before going to bed, briefly told what had passed in the morning between herself and Mr. Reeve.

"And, dear, dear mamma," said Carry, with a glow in her guileless face, "I told him I could not be his. I could not say otherwise."

"Dear child," returned the mother, putting her frail arm over her daughter's neck, "I doubt not, God inspired your answer. Darling, we must be patient. There is happiness elsewhere."

Carry did not tell her mother that she could not be the rector's wife, because she still loved Edgar, and would love him evermore. Martha, however, knew it; but though the knowledge made her sorrowful, her sorrow was hidden from Carry.

So, in that bright summer-time, Carry went forth afresh—to live it down.

And, while Merton-Piggott was wondering when the rector would be announced to the world as Carry's accepted suitor, Mr. Reeve was living *his* secret down too.

But ere many days had passed, strange events troubled Carry's life, and the lives of all who loved her.

CHAPTER XIV.

BOWSTRING NO. 2.

THE two years between June 1, 1822, and June 1, 1824, brought less good fortune to Mr. Alexander Barber than that sagacious member of a lucky family had (to use his language) 'made his book for.' The curse, which a wholesome superstition believes to be inseparable from ill-gotten wealth, hung over the money he had extorted from Edgar Turrett, and the cash which he had borrowed on the young Squire's post-obit bond. Everything he did with the ill-gotten gains turned out ill. Water flooded the coal mine in which he had shares. His best horse, that 'was in to win everything, and a touch or two beyond,' broke its neck in a steeplechase. Cards turned against him. Dice turned against him. Messrs. Richard Sharp, Samuel Miles, and William Dovetail were equally unfortunate; and as Alexander Barber was solely responsible for the liabilities of those enterprising men of business, it came to pass that, with all his vaunted command over the goddess Fortune, and

all his 'cuteness, he found himself, at the last-mentioned date, without funds—and without credit.

But though adversity frowned upon him, and though Mr. Forrester, of King's Heath, refused to advance him another £50, Alec Barber did not despair. Neither could he see aught in his career to justify remorse. "Never mind, Alec," he said to his particular friend, "whatever the unkind world may say of you, you shall have my good word. Who hasn't his reverses? Every man who has the pluck to play a bold game. But it ain't often that a man turns up with your virtues, old friend. You're an industrious and prudent man; you're up early, and you're down late, and you eat the bread of carefulness. Many men, with the turn of the wheel you came in for two years and a half since, would have forthwith taken a big farm, and lived *gent*! But you, like a modest, prudent fellow, determined not to play that game till you had a bigger capital. So you set to work to increase your store. You have kept up your snug little place near Easthaven, where Mrs. Alec and marsh-fever have it all pretty much their own way; and you've been scraping about much as you did when you didn't know where to lay your hand on a second 'tenner.' But the store hasn't increased. The more's the pity! But you don't want to drop your head yet, for you've got two pretty tolerable good strings to your bow. String No. 1—the young Squire. As soon as the old 'un drops, you'll put on the screw pretty tight there, I guess! How the deuce that ancient scarecrow has managed to live so long, I can't make out. Never mind, Alec, he'll die one of these days, and then you'll have something stiffer than a post-obit out of Mr. Edgar Antony. But you mayn't touch him yet. He's as dry as a March wind just now.

“String No. 2.—John Braddock, bookseller, Buttermarket Street, Sedgehassock! Ay, he *is* a string! Master Braddock has been doing just a little tidy in business for some time past. Not content with buying the Widow Carley’s business, hang me! if he hasn’t now just bought the freehold of the premises in the Buttermarket. Skin me purple, Alec, that’s a bold rig for a convict who has sneaked home afore his time is out! I just fancy how his eyes will start out of his head when I just drop in upon him, and say, ‘Here you are, Mr. Convict. You’re quite fat enough now, and I’ve come to eat you!’ I rather have a notion, Alec, we shall enjoy ourselves just then. Yes, Alec, you must just give Mr. Braddock a call! Talk about ill-luck! What’s a run of ill-luck to a man like you, who can put the screw on two such men as Squire Turrett and Bookseller Braddock?”

In accordance with the above-mentioned resolution, Alec Barber drove into Sedgehassack one June evening (the last evening but one it was of the month), and having put his horse up at an unpretending hotel, walked to the Buttermarket Street, and entered John Braddock’s shop just as a shopman and a printer’s devil were putting up the shutters, and closing the premises for the night.

“You’re just in time, sir,” observed the shopman, committing a shutter to the care of his assistant devil, and wiping his hands on his apron, so that they should be fit to serve the strange customer with the most delicate wares in the shop.

“Thank you, young man,” returned Alec, coming down on him like a needle. “I *am* just in time, and you for a wonder are just in the right. It’s a rule of mine to be just in time.”

"What can I serve you with, sir?" inquired the man with an air of displeasure rather than amusement.

"Now, did I tell you I wanted to be served with anything? Take my advice, young man, and don't think so fast. It'll be time enough for you to ask what I want when I tell you that I am here to lay out money."

"I meant no offence, sir,—but it's closing time," answered the man;—and he added in a changed voice, "Oh, here's my master. Here's a gentleman, sir."

Turning round, as the man uttered these last words, Alexander Barber stood face to face with John Braddock, bookseller, Buttermarket Street, Sedgehassock.

"Your servant, sir; can I have the pleasure of doing anything for you?" inquired the latter, without any movement indicative of surprise or agitation, although he recognized his visitor, and had little difficulty in conjecturing the chief object of his visit.

"Gad, how quietly you come upon one!" observed Alec, with a slight loss of his customary coolness. "I didn't hear you."

"Perhaps not,—I am a quiet man."

"Do you often creep about in that fashion?"

"My steps don't always make a noise."

There was an influence in John Braddock's self-contained quietude, that somehow made Alec Barber ill at ease,—depriving him of nerve just at the moment when he most needed the full use of his faculties.

Standing in a respectful attitude, that well became a trader in the presence of a well-dressed visitor to his shop, Mr. Braddock waited in silence, as though he expected an order.

Alec's thin lips worked, and a momentary tremor

of the muscles crossed his pale face. Passing the fingers of his right hand through his ragged whiskers, he gazed steadily at Bowstring No. 2, and then inquired, "Can you allow me a few minutes' private conversation?"

"Certainly, sir; step this way. Daniel, you can shut up and go home."

"Ay, sir," responded Daniel.

"I'll attend to this gentleman's business, and—let him out."

"Ay, sir," responded Daniel, with a side look to his assistant devil, which meant, "Now, boy, be sharp, and out with the last shutter."

Turning again to Alec Barber, the sedate tradesman said, "This way, sir; if you will follow me into my parlour, we shall be alone."

In less than another half-minute the two men were seated, face to face, in the little back parlour.

"You do not remember me, Mr. Braddock?" observed Alec, terminating a silence which Mr. Braddock was in no hurry to break.

"I remember you well," was the answer, made with perfect composure.

"The devil you do!"

"You're Alexander Barber, farmer, Little Deane, near Easthaven. I once had the pleasure of drinking tea in your house, with *your* wife."

"With *your* daughter," replied Alec, firing his first shot.

"Exactly so, with *my* daughter," answered John Braddock, catching the shot without any apparent effort, and dropping it at his feet.

"You are, perhaps, just a trifle surprised at my calling on you?" resumed Alec, making an attempt to sustain his habitual impudence, while he was seized by

a painful misgiving—an apprehension that John Braddock would not be such an easy customer to deal with as he had hoped.

“I am only surprised you haven’t been to call on me sooner.”

“Indeed!”

Thus far the interview had been all in John Braddock’s favour; and Alec felt it.

“Are we quite secure from being overheard?” inquired Alec, seeing that it was necessary forthwith to come to closer quarters with his antagonist.

“Quite.”

“The man and boy—have they left the shop?”

“Look for yourself,” answered John Braddock, rising and opening the door between the parlour and the shop, so that Alec might see that the business-room was quiet, and shut up for the night.

“My people are gone home. My housekeeper is in her kitchen, where she can’t overhear us. Just be quiet a minute, and I’ll shut the shutters and light the candles. The summer evening is still light, but it will close in soon, and this room is a dark one.”

Having said this in his low, hard voice, John Braddock lit candles, shut shutters, and resumed his seat.

“People are sometimes overheard when they least expect it,” observed Alec, significantly.

“They are; and, as you say,—when they least expect it.”

“How was Mr. Wylie when you saw him last?” next inquired Alec, vainly attempting to appear as careless and unconcerned as Bowstring No. 2.

“He is better, but his illness has changed him. He has determined to give up his profession.”

"Indeed! I had not heard that."

"Exactly."

"He has made a tidy bit of money."

"Possibly. If he has, he won't let you touch any of it!"

"Skin me purple!" exclaimed Alec, striking his fist on the table, "you're a cool hand!"

"I am;—at least, I am a cooler hand than you."

A silence in the snug little parlour—a minute's silence, broken only by the audible breathings of the two antagonists.

"But I haven't come here to talk about the old mountebank," resumed Alec, fortifying himself with indulgence in offensive bluster.

"Of course, you have not."

"I have come here, Mr. Braddock, to tell you a few facts about your early history," continued Alec, raising his voice slightly, and throwing into it a tone of menace.

"You needn't trouble yourself. I know them much better than you do."

"(Unmentionable expression)—do you suppose I am going to be trifled with?"

Mr. Braddock paused for fifty seconds, and then said, "You'll not get any child's play from me."

Uttering this implied threat, the elderly tradesman lowered his voice almost to a whisper.

"Listen to me!" returned Alec, with suppressed rage.

"I am listening."

"When you were a young man you were a barrister-at-law, named Herbert Andrews. Am I right?"

"Quite right."

"In the year 1793 you were transported for life, for stealing a gentleman's purse. Am I right?"

"Not exactly. In the year 1793—more than thirty years since—I was transported for life, because a jury believed I stole a gentleman's purse. Excuse the slight correction. It is as well to be correct in a matter of business."

"Thank you. I have no objection to the amendment, if it gratifies your feelings. Let me go on. My wife is your daughter."

"I admitted that a few minutes since."

"Your daughter by your *first* marriage?"

"Exactly; by my *first* marriage."

"You had a second wife."

"I had.—Thank you for the information."

"That second wife was Adelaide Turrett, late of the Hollow House, Castle Hollow."

A tremor ran over John Braddock's frame, as he answered in the same calm voice, "When I married her, she lived in her father's house—in Fitzgerald Passage, 'Old Law Quarter,' London. Go on."

"The young Squire of Castle Hollow is your son."

"He is."

"And my brother-in-law,—by my wife's half-blood?"

"He is."

"Your marriage to his mother was a secret marriage?"

"It was so secret," responded John Braddock, in low, distinct utterances, "that the shame of it was hidden from every eye. It was so secret that she and her father resolved to keep it secret, and for many long years succeeded in doing so,—until a strange sad event enabled you to ferret it out. Would you have me admit anything more?"

"No," returned Alec, triumphantly, "you have admitted quite enough. That'll do. We understand each other now."

"Do we?—I understand you."

"You see, I have been on your track for some time!" observed Alec, throwing himself back in his chair, stretching forth his legs, and sticking his hands into his breeches pockets.

"Excuse me,—I must correct you again. It's I who have been on your track."

Alec bit his lips, and then endeavoured to hide his sense of discomfiture in boisterous laughter.

"How so, my dear father-in-law?" asked the scoundrel, breaking into another roar of laughter.

"If you'll be quiet, I'll tell you. But it's impossible to transact business with all that noise."

Whereupon Alec ceased laughing, and John Brad-dock resumed.

"I was on your track, you mean scamp," he said—mildly, as if he were addressing a woman, "immediately after you peeped through the window of Castle Hollow Church, and heard Miss Turrett address William Newton, the walking packman, by his former name of Herbert Andrews. That was the strange sad event, which I spoke of just now, that enabled you to make what you are pleased to term your discoveries. I was on your track the very next day, when you drove your wife home from Merton-Piggott to Little Deane and pulled up on the Easthaven turnpike road—to scan the features of William Newton, the packman—the tramp—the pedlar. I was on your track when you went to London, searching registers, and obtaining the proofs that Miss Turrett of Castle Hollow was my wife; that her brother's infant son died on his passage home

from India ; that the young Squire of Castle Hollow was—her son and *mine*. Why, you poor fool, you never took a single step that I didn't know of it as soon as it was made."

The contempt expressed in these last words was all the more forcible from the mildness of the speaker's tone and manner.

"I was on your track," continued John Braddock, "when you extorted the money from the young Squire of Castle Hollow, and the post-obit bond—which you have entrusted to Forrester, the King's Heath money lender (who has advanced you money upon it), and which consequently is worth so much waste-paper."

Alec Barber started in his seat.

"Keep quiet, you feeble scamp!" John Braddock went on, with the same air and tone of calm, unutterable disdain. "Keep your seat. I have been on your track throughout the last two years and a half, taking note of every one of the absurd blunders by which you have thrown away the money which good luck and rascality brought to your hands. All the time that I have lived here I have known that you either would discover, or had discovered who I was. But the knowledge hasn't frightened me,—doesn't frighten me."

"Quite right not to be frightened, Mr. Braddock. Fear wouldn't help you."

"It never struck you," continued the bookseller, without noticing Alec's interruption, "that when you had unearthed me, you'd find it beyond your power to make effectual use of your information. But it occurred to me ; and confident of my security I have gone on, in this city, just as I should have done if you had been drowned before ever I entered it. Why, man, I'll help you on a step to the purpose of your visit. You

have come here, hoping to extort money from me by threatening to denounce me in case I don't comply with your demands,—to denounce me as a runaway convict whose life is forfeited because he has returned from transportation, against the laws of his country. Come, —to save trouble, just be good enough to suppose that you've made your threat."

Having looked at the ceiling and whistled for half a minute, Alec dropped his eyes on his companion once more, and said, "Well,—I have no objection to that way of putting it. Let it be supposed. What then?"

"Just this," returned Mr. Braddock, eyeing his son-in-law steadily. "I say to you, 'Mr. Alexander Barber, you are quite ready to denounce me to the mayor of Sedgehassock, or any other magistrate; but I advise you, before you make any statements about me to the authorities, to be quite sure that you can support them by evidence.' In confidence, I tell you that I was Herbert Andrews; but I defy you to prove it. In confidence, I tell you that I am the man who, more than thirty years back, was convicted of felony and transported for life; but I defy you to establish the fact by witness or evidence of any kind. In confidence, I tell you that I had a private interview, once upon a time, with Miss Turrett in the Castle Hollow Church, and I allow that you overheard what passed at that interview; but I warn you that you'll be in an awkward position when I tell the magistrate to whom you make the statement, that your words are utterly false, that your story (trumped up for the purpose of extorting money from me, and published when you found I wouldn't yield to your demands)—is an impudent lie!"

So perturbed was Alec Barber at this view of the

case, he sprang to his feet, and clenching his fist looked savagely at the tradesman, as he exclaimed, "Do you suppose, man, I am to be put off by this child's play? (Unutterable expression)."

"Child's play! child's play!" returned John Brad-dock, with the faintest possible manifestation of a readiness to smile. "Is it child's play when I (with the full knowledge of your discoveries) keep on living quietly within a long day's journey of you, carry on my business, get the respect of my fellow-citizens, obtain the command of capital, and become the owner of the important freehold premises in which my business is carried on? You'll have to search a long time before you find the child who'll play in that way. Any how, Mr. Barber, it's a game I am going to play out. Go to the mayor, and denounce me, if you like. I shall meet you, face to face, before his worship to-morrow with as much composure as I display now. I can give such a history of my past life, year by year, backed up by unimpeachable testimony, that his worship will be quite satisfied I am a man of good repute,—whilst it will be quite unnecessary for me to tell him you are the greatest rogue to be found in all the 'light lands.' I am ready to meet you! I defy you to hurt a hair of my head!"

From the commencement of the interview, John Brad-dock had had the best of the contest, and Alec had been seized with an unpleasant conviction that he was fighting with one who was altogether his superior,—in intellect, adroitness, courage, character. Never before, in contest with another man, had the King's Heath man been so sensible of his inability to hold his own, and of his deficiency with regard to those qualities on the possession of which he had hitherto especially prided himself.

"And now," added Mr. Braddock, with increased politeness, rising as he spoke, "I think we may as well bring this interview to a close. However much we prolong it, I shall still come to the same conclusion. Do what you will, I defy you to hurt a hair of my head "

"If I can't put a rope round your neck," returned Alec Barber, in a harsh voice, rising also, "I can touch you elsewhere by blabbing. Anyhow, I can *prove this*, —I can prove that the convict Herbert Andrews was the father of the young Squire of Castle Hollow, and can blurt out the secret which his mother kept from him till ——"

"Till you revealed it to him," put in John Braddock, quickly.

"I can blurt out the secret which she and her father planned to live down. Anyhow I can do that !"

"True," answered John Braddock, resuming his seat, "and you can by that means throw away your last chance of being able to extort more money from the young Squire. Yes, you can do that. Any fool can kill his goose which lays golden eggs ! No doubt."

"I'd kill my goose to be revenged on you !" exclaimed Alec Barber, with a succession of oaths.

The scoundrel was furious at seeing card after card drop from his own hands without winning him a single trick.

As Alec Barber began to swear, John Braddock began to laugh. It was not a pleasant laugh ; but, still it did not sound like the laugh of a wicked man.

Unable to improve his position, and unwilling to leave the bookseller's parlour in such utter defeat,

Alec Barber was still swearing away, and vowing that he would skin himself purple if he was not revenged on his enemy, when Bowstring No. 2 surprised him by greatly changing his tone, and making what appeared to be an enormous concession, at the very moment when there was no pressure being put upon him.

"There," said Mr. Braddock, "now you're speaking naturally,—now I shouldn't wonder if we may come to terms."

Alec was silent at the word 'terms.'

"You are furious at finding me a more difficult man to deal with than you anticipated. You expected to make me shiver in my boots, and promise to give you anything you might ask; whereas I have only snapped my fingers in your face, and defied you to hurt me. I can understand your annoyance. You would like to take vengeance on the man who is not going to be robbed by you without protest or struggle. I can understand that also."

"You'll have good reason to understand it," growled Alec, "unless we come to *terms*."

"Well, that's what I feel. And so, if I can do it without making too great a sacrifice, I should like to make a bargain with you."

"You're speaking more like a sensible man, Mr. Braddock."

"Thank you—thank you for the compliment, Mr. Barber."

There was a strange smile on John Braddock's face, as he thus replied to Alec's courtesy.

Taking off his spectacles, he wiped them deliberately with his pocket-kerchief, saying as he did so, "I need hardly tell you, Mr. Barber, that these glasses are worn only for the sake of their respectable appearance. A

skulking convict must pay attention to appearance. There—I'll put them on again—and then we'll go to business once more. Now, Mr. Barber, I have been frank with you. With great cleverness you have discovered my secrets, and I cannot refrain from saying that you've shown some talent in the achievement; but I only tell you the plain truth, when I say that, as far as I am *personally* concerned (I mean, as regards my *personal* safety), your discoveries are matters of perfect indifference to me. My past conduct must satisfy you of the truth of my words. Of course, I should never have become a freeholder in this city, if I had not felt secure that you could never send me to the gallows. So, looking only to my own *personal safety*, I would not pay a single silver sixpence for your silence. But the case is different when I think of others. At present I should greatly object to your blurting out the secret which the old Squire of Castle Hollow and his daughter vainly, but bravely, endeavoured to live down. At present, the young Squire does not know that John Braddock of this house is his father; at least I have never communicated the fact to him; and of course you haven't, for until you (acting for yourself) have made all possible profit out of me, by practising on my fears, it is clearly not to your interest to communicate to any living man your knowledge as to who I am. I may assume therefore that, though you have spoken to Mr. Edgar Turrett about Herbert Andrews, you have never mentioned to him the name of John Braddock."

"I have not done so *yet*," was the answer, made with a significant emphasis on the last word, as the speaker sat down again.

"Exactly;—you haven't done so *yet*;—but you will one day. Now, Mr. Barber, I am especially anxious that

Mr. Edgar Turrett should not take any personal interest in John Braddock until the death of the old Squire ; and I am also especially anxious that so long as the old Squire may live, the terrible secret of my son's birth should be known only to those who at this present time are acquainted with it. So you see, I want your silence for a short time,—for a *very* short time,—since it is not to be expected that old Mr. Turrett, of Castle Hollow, will live till the end of the year.”

“What do you want my silence for?”

“Well, that is my affair ; —but still, Mr. Barber, I will be frank with you. I wish to be deliberate.—So long as my unhappy son must live at Castle Hollow with his grandfather, I should not like to add to his uneasiness by troubling him about John Braddock of Sedgehassock. As soon as he is owner of Castle Hollow, I shall make myself known to him, and give him a father's advice. I shall then urge him to make a liberal arrangement with *you*, and take such measures as may ensure him the best chance of being able to live the ugly secret of his house down.—But, till the old Squire's death, I would rather not approach my son.”

“Well, what will you pay for my silence?”

“That's a seasonable question, Mr. Barber. What will I pay? A question of price is always a delicate one. In the first place, I cannot be expected to forget that it is already to your interest to observe the silence which I ask of you. You have, for the present, wrung from Mr. Edgar Turrett all the money he can give you ; and if you publish his secret to the world, you throw away your last hope of getting more from him. Still, I know that you are in want of money ; and men driven desperate by want of

money, often do what is very foolish. Sometimes they'll even be so insane as to kill the goose which lays the golden eggs. I wish to preserve you from such folly. I wish, moreover, to induce you to think that it will better answer your purpose to take a moderate amount of my money, than to revenge yourself on me, because you won't have a great deal. So, let's see;—you are in want of ready money?"

"I want ready money," assented Alec, seeing that it was best to submit to John Braddock's tone of superiority, though he was not the less enraged—because he so submitted.

"I know you do. You are going to Newton races (to-morrow, Tuesday), and you'll see Forrester, of King's Heath there,—and he'll ask you for the £100 you have promised to repay him immediately, any day this last month."

Alec Barber started with surprise at this fresh proof of John Braddock's intimacy with his affairs.

"You see," continued the bookseller, smiling at his astonishment, "I have been on *your* track when you have not been on mine. But still your immediate need is £100 for Forrester, and a small sum (let us say £40) for other personal uses."

"Give me £150. That'll be enough to help me on with till the end of the year, as I have money coming in from certain sources.—It aint much for my silence."

"It's more than five times as much as I can let you have to-night."

Alec's countenance fell.

"Respectable tradesmen," continued Mr. Braddock, "do not make money so fast as you betting gentlemen;—on the other hand, they don't lose it so fast."

I am a prosperous man of business, but I can't throw about money as if it were dross wheat."

"Say what you'll do."

"I'll let you have the £150," replied John Braddock, after a short period of deliberation, "but not to-night,—nor to-morrow."

"I must have it to-morrow, for Forrester.—The ungrateful thief is pressing me."

"Ingratitude is a sadly common vice, Mr. Barber."

"I must have it to-morrow," repeated Alec.

"Good; get it where you can. You won't get it so soon from me, for the simple reason that I can't let you have so much, till the day after to-morrow."

"Give me something on account."

"That's a more reasonable request. I can let you have five-and-twenty sovereigns to-night. To-morrow (Tuesday) morning I start out on my country rounds, to collect money and get orders. To-morrow I shall have some large payments made me; and if you'll meet me before ten o'clock, A.M. at the Mettingham 'One Bell Inn,' I'll give you the other £125. When you see Forrester to-morrow, you can give him £10 or £15 for ten days' more time, and on Wednesday you'll feel like a gentleman again."

"It would be more convenient for me to take the money here."

"Exactly, but it would be less so for me. I must start out on my country rounds. And, moreover, I do not mean to admit you oftener than is necessary to this parlour. I don't wish Sedgehassock people to think I am an intimate associate of such a rascal as you are."

"Thank you, thank you, Mr. Braddock."

"A skulking convict like Herbert Andrews," explained the bookseller, "must be particular. He must be *very* particular."

"I'll take the money, and meet you at Mettingham, the day after to-morrow."

"Of course you will."

Rising once more from his seat as he spoke these words, John Braddock opened an *escritoire* which stood in the corner of the parlour, and having taken a bag of money from a cash-box, counted out twenty-five sovereigns to his visitor.

"You see, I treat you fairly," he said, as he counted out the money. "This is all the cash I have by me. Now that I have given you twenty-five sovereigns, I have only five left for myself till the payments are made to me to-morrow."

With a quick clutch and a flashing eye Alec snapped up the money.

"By the time we meet at Mettingham, I shall have thought over our mutual relations, and shall be able to make you some definite proposal, Mr. Barber.—And now, sir, allow me to lead you to the door, and bid you good night."

"Skin me purple!" exclaimed Alec, getting up from his seat, and giving way to a genuine burst of admiration for Bowstring No. 2, "skin me purple—but you're a clever fellow! You're a man! And I can't help respecting you!"

"Thank you, thank you, Mr. Barber. It will be best for us to entertain friendly feelings towards each other."

Whereupon John Braddock opened a side door, and having conducted Alec along a narrow passage, opened

the private outer door of the house, and let him into the Buttermarket Street—which thoroughfare was already quiet, and altogether free of traffic. There was no moon out that night; and the three wretched oil-lamps which were supposed to ‘light up’ the antique street, merely rendered the darkness visible.

As the bookseller stood at his door, candle in hand, and gazing down the narrow Buttermarket, he heard the sound of Alec Barber’s retreating steps for many seconds after the rascal’s figure was lost to sight.

Although it was dark, it was a calm, warm summer’s night—suitable for walking exercise.

Putting on his hat, John Braddock passed nearly an hour pacing up and down the pavements of the quiet street in which he resided,—meditating on that strange past which lay buried under the waving barley and poppies; and laying plans for the future, which seemed to him to be growing more and more clear.

Half a dozen times during the course of the hour, wayfarers passed up the dim, narrow, antique street; and as they came alongside the bookseller, they looked up into his face, and gave him friendly greeting. “Dark—but a sweet, quiet night, Mr. Braddock.” “Better out-doors than a-bed—eh, Mr. Braddock?” “Good night to you, Mr. Braddock!”

To which friendly greetings Mr. Braddock made curt but suitable answers.

At length, the pleasure of walking exhausted, John Braddock murmured to himself, “No, I won’t see poor Wylie before I leave home.—Better not!—better not.”

Then John Braddock went in; shut, and barred, and locked his outer door; and returning once more to

the little parlour, took from a secret drawer of his *escritoire* a case containing a brace of pistols, to which arms he paid (with oil and flannel and leather) all those attentions which volunteers *ought* to bestow on their rifles. "It's long," thought John Braddock to himself as he finished cleaning them, "since I had occasion to use one of them; but it is as well to be prepared for the worst. I don't like to travel with a lot of money in my pouch about the 'light lands,'—unarmed.—That would never do!"

Having returned the pistols to their case, and put the case in his pocket; having carefully locked the drawers of his *escritoire*, and seen that the interior of his shop was secure,—John Braddock went up-stairs to bed.

As sleep came upon him, these thoughts left him: "Miss Adelaide Turrett was quite justified—nay, she was quite right—not to tell me that the young Squire was her son,—our son. That part of the terrible secret which she was living down, was not hers alone. Had it been so she would have told it to me. To others, as well as to me, she was faithful unto death. I, too, will be faithful unto death—faithful after death."

By sunrise the next morning, John Braddock was upon his stout black horse, trotting out of Sedgessock on his country rounds.

CHAPTER XV.

WAYSIDE GREETINGS.

It is scarcely necessary to say that Mr. Alexander Barber was less than half pleased with his interview with the Sedgehassock bookseller. He had flattered his especial friend Alec that John Braddock's eyes would start from his head when he dropped in upon him, and said, "Here you are, Mr. Convict! You're quite fat enough now; and I've come to eat you." But far from being overcome with terror and surprise, Mr. Convict had looked him steadily in the face, and asked why he had not come sooner. Instead of accepting Alec Barber's terms, he had undertaken to state terms of his own. It was true he had expressed his readiness to yield a moderate amount of money to the screw; but the sum was to be named by himself,—and the consideration of the payment also. "Go and tell the world that I am an escaped convict. You have my free leave to do so; I won't give you a single sixpence for your silence on that chief point. But for your silence on what you deem affairs of less import-

ance to John Braddock, the bookseller,—namely, the marriage of Adelaide Turrett to Herbert Andrews, and the parentage of the young Squire of Castle Hollow,—am willing to pay you a moderate sum.” Such was the language of Bowstring No. 2, from whom Alec Barber had expected—consternation and abject submission.

There were other disagreeable features to the case.

It was clear that John Braddock was playing, and had long been playing, a game of his own,—a game the moves of which were all beyond Alec’s range of vision ; and the object of which could not be other than to counterplot him, Alec. What could the man be after ? Could he have possessed himself of certain facts in the past career of him, Alec, which would completely turn the tables,—making him, Alec, the suitor for mercy, whilst John Braddock would be in a position to say, “ Now, Mr. Barber, I shall consult my own convenience by sending you to slavery for the rest of your days.” As this terrible suspicion crossed Alec’s mind, his face became ghastlier in its whiteness than ever, and he bit his ragged whiskers in dismay.

Moreover, how had the man made himself so familiar with his (Alec’s) movements—that he not only knew of his having searched the London registers, but was acquainted with the particulars of his pecuniary affairs ? How, for instance, did he know of his liabilities to Forrester of King’s Heath,—of his appointment with Forrester at the Newton races, of the exact sum which it was requisite for him to give the money-lender without delay ? For several minutes, Alec strove to solve the problem ; and then, a sudden light bursting in upon the darkness, he exclaimed, “ By —— ! I’ll kill her. She has betrayed me ! The old rascal and she have been acting together ! She has picked my locks, and

read my letters ! May I be skinned alive, if she hasn't betrayed me ! I'll kill her !"

This thought occurred to Mr. Alexander Barber as he was driving from Sedgehassock to Newton ; and it certainly tended to increase his enjoyment of the bright, serene summer's morning. Everything concurred with that explanation of the mystery ; and the man gnashed his teeth with rage as he regarded himself—outwitted, befooled, undone, by the wretched woman whom, under the name of wife, he had detained a prisoner at Little Deane. His wrath found vent in vows that he would be 'the death of Mrs. Alec,'—and in a deadly resolution that those vows should be fulfilled.

Gradually he became more calm.

Even the explanation was attended with something of comfort. If John Braddock had derived his knowledge from Christina alone, that knowledge would not include the 'certain facts of his past career' just alluded to. In that case, Alec Barber had no reason to fear his mysterious opponent. This reflection made him bolder ; and under its influence he found courage to think what attitude he ought to assume to the bookseller at their next interview—which was fixed for the following day.

"The man is right, Alec," observed the rascal to his particular friend. "We might find it very difficult to identify him ;—it's funny that that should never have struck me before ! And yet, after all, it isn't so very strange ; for who could have counted on a convict showing fight in that cool way ? Hang him !—ay, we will hang him, too—we must take more time and trouble before we buy the rope out of which his halter is made. Of course, the means for identifying him must exist

somewhere,—and we must get them, before he will acknowledge our power. Yes, Alec, my boy, there's more work cut out for you!—but we'll do it,—we'll do it! Nobody shall say that Alec was beaten because he wouldn't take pains. Skin me, Alec, but we'll be too many for him! But we must be quiet. We'll meet him to-morrow at Mettingham, take his money, and agree to his terms. Then we'll go to work again, and see how we can outdiddle him. As for Mrs. Alec, we'll kill her!—Ay, we'll kill her!"

Having thus talked himself into a more confident and hopeful humour, Alec Barber laid the reins loose on his horse's back, and giving a series of shrill whistles, was carried over the smooth turnpike-road at the rate of fourteen miles an hour. "What a neat stepper he is,—he's worth his weight in gold. Evil will be the day when I have to part with him."

As Alec thus gave utterance to his satisfaction, he overtook a waggon, heavily laden with holiday-makers, bound for the Newton races. Two other carriages were in sight, ahead of him; and in the rear he heard the gallop of horsemen. 'The road' was beginning to be lively with people wending to Newton.

During the time spent in travelling over the next three miles, Alec passed several parties. Enlivened by such companionship, his spirits rose; and dismissing all painful thoughts of John Braddock, and Mrs. Alec, and Forrester of King's Heath, he was beginning to anticipate the pleasure of the day's excursion, when at the Fulbourne crossings he encountered the young Squire of Castle Hollow, riding moodily along,—on the back of 'Black Baron.'

For a moment Edgar looked at his enemy, and then turned his eyes in another direction.

"Morning to you, Squire!" exclaimed Alec with his customary effrontery, as he pulled up his horse, "I want a word with you."

"What do you want? The time isn't come yet for more money. I have paid you the £300 for this year."

"True, Squire,—all fair so far. But the sight of you has put a thought in my head."

"Well?"

"I've got something else to tell you. I told you some time since that your father was alive, but I never told you where you could find him. Come,—what'll you give me for this little piece of information? I want money,—and I'm game to turn an honest penny."

"You cursed scoundrel," said Edgar, in a low voice, "your short day of power is over. I bought your silence, not for my own sake,—but for the sake of two who were dearer to me than my life or my honour. One of them is in heaven! The other can never feel the words of your tongue!"

"The old Squire isn't dead?"

"His body still lives; but his mind is dead. Go to him with your secret. Tell it to him. He will not understand you. And now, man, hear me,—for I have something to say that will not please you. I can prove that you have broken the conditions of the bond I once gave you, and it is just so much waste paper. Now you can go on. If you stop one minute longer where you are, I'll pull you from your gig and thrash you,—as I forgot to flog you at Gedgrave."

There was mischief in the young Squire's furious eye.

Alec thought it better to do as he was bid. So he

once again whistled to his horse, and resumed his journey to Newton.

But before his high-spirited horse had sprung to the collar, another carriage turned an angle of the cross-roads. It was a lumbering open chaise, on four wheels; and in the front and principal seat sat Mr. Stephen Dowse, bank-agent of Merton-Piggott, with a clerk by his side.

"Good morning, Mr. Turrett," observed the agent.

"Good morning."

"That's a fast horse your friend is driving, sir."

"He's no friend of mine," said Edgar fiercely.

"He's Alec Barber, the trainer."

"Indeed! I thought he was a friend, as I saw him speaking to you."

"Did you?—Then you are mistaken, Mr. Dowse.—It appears we are travelling by different roads. Good morning, sir."

Whereupon Stephen Dowse, by means of sibilant plutterings with his lips, and a liberal use of a stout whip, stimulated his fat horse, so that it dragged the lumbering chaise at a speed of full seven miles an hour, and Edgar at foot pace rode on towards Newton.

"There's more mischief between those two," thought Stephen Dowse, as he made slow progress to the town, whither the interests of Messrs. Crabtree, Scuttle and Co. called him. "There's more mischief between those two scoundrels. What the deuce can it be? What'll be the end of it? Likely enough, Master Alec has been trying to put the screw on again,—as Forrester has cut off the supplies, and is pressing for payment of old sums. Master Alec must look

sharp, or one day he'll find the young Squire turn upon him, and do something worse than merely knock him down. By Croesus ! the young'un looked as if he'd like to murder him. And to think of my ward caring for a sullen, savage, horse-racing scamp like that ! To think of it, when, if she'd only like, she might take up her quarters in the rectory ! ”

On the Newton race-course, Edgar Turrett saw Alec Barber, but he took no further notice of him. He saw also many of the gentlemen with whom he had been for years accustomed to hunt and associate at race meetings. To them he was more communicative and friendly than he had been for many a day ; and on being pressed by a party of old companions to take a seat with them at the race dinner, he complied with their request. Indeed the young Squire felt himself unusually drawn to them. For several weeks he had looked forward to a speedy release from Castle Hollow bondage. Rapidly becoming weaker in body, as well as mind, his grandfather was in a condition which had induced Dr. Magnum to assert confidently that he would breathe his last before the close of the year. In consequence of which announcement, Edgar had begun to regard his residence in his native land as an affair of weeks, and was secretly making plans for his departure as soon as the old man's death left him at liberty to carry out his resolution. As the time when he would quit the haunts and associates of his youth and early manhood thus seemed to be drawing nigh, his temper was softened, and his mind rested more frequently on the joys that had been, than on present sorrows and future uncertainty. The change for the better in his manner, tone, voice, was so marked, that it became a subject of conversation, encouraging those few who wished him

well to believe that he was less embarrassed than common rumour stated,—and to hope that he would even yet maintain the honour of his old name and family in the ‘light lands.’

His demeanour at the race dinner gave countenance to such hope. It was afterwards remarked by those who dined with him on that occasion, that he conversed freely, and with his old gaiety. The chairman having asked him to propose a toast, he complied with the request, making a brief but effective speech, which was received with general and cordial applause. Later in the evening, he sang a song, not less to the pleasure than the surprise of those who knew how gloomy, and stern, and morose had been his habitual mood for the preceding two years and a half.

Leaving the dinner-party at ten o’clock, the young Squire mounted ‘Black Baron,’ and started out alone in the direction of Castle Hollow. As the distance between Newton and the Hollow House was nearly fifty miles, he had no intention of making the entire journey before sleeping. His plan was to ride to an inn, which stood in a thinly inhabited part of the heath country, about sixteen miles away from the Newton race-course. On the following day he would leisurely return to the ‘old home.’

When asked a few days later what induced him to leave Newton at so late an hour, to seek at an inferior tavern a bed, when he might have passed the night more comfortably at the race-town, he said, “I wished for quiet and solitude, having grown weary of the noise and heat of the Newton hotel.” It would have been better for him had he endured those inconveniences a short time longer.

Riding slowly over the cool moist grass that bordered

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the wide road of the open country, Edgar had put six miles between him and the race-town—when as he was looking up at the stars of the cloudless and moonless sky and was listening to the deep notes of a watch dog, which kept on baying at a distant homestead, the sound of a gig, whirled along at a rapid pace, reached his ears. The horse was on the trot, but its trot was of no common speed. A man's voice, that of the driver, was also heard in the distance, yelling and shouting to his horse, and then singing the chorus of a drinking song. In less than two minutes the vehicle was alongside of Edgar, who had reined up by the side of the road, wishing to keep clear of the gig, and escape the observation of its boisterous occupant. For he had recognized the voice as Alec Barber's.

His endeavours to escape Alec's notice were unsuccessful.

Recognizing the young Squire, the King's Heath man (as he shot past) turned in his seat, and without drawing rein screamed out "Ya-ha, Squire.—Who's your father—you son of a convict?"

In an instant, Edgar's spurs were stuck into 'Black Baron's' sides, and he was at full gallop after the scoundrel, with a sudden fierce resolve to pull him from his seat, and chastise him in accordance with his merits.

As quickly Alec Barber gave loose rein to his high-tempered horse, and lashed it furiously with his whip. Bred and trained in the first instance for the turf, and unused to such treatment, the noble creature rushed into a gallop, outstripping the best speed of the young Squire's hunter; whilst Alec, turning round again, yelled at his pursuer, "Ya-ha! answer me—who's your father?"

You're a convict's son !—Do you hear me ?—Ya-ha !''

The man was drunk. None but a drunken man would have so driven, at the imminent risk of breaking his neck.

When it was clear to Edgar that the fellow was mad with liquor, prudence and disdain checked his wrath. He saw that if he merely continued to gallop in the wake of the scoundrel's wheels, and so cause him to continue the race, the gig would be upset, and the driver in his hands, before 'Black Baron' had turned a hair. But what purpose would that serve? Had the rascal been sober, he would have caught and flogged him till he was within an inch of death. But he could not raise his hand to strike even such a fellow when he was disabled by drink.

Then a vision of his helpless, imbecile grandfather—lying at Castle Hollow in dotage, waiting the last stroke of death—crossed the young Squire's mind, and for a minute dashed down the flames of his anger, even as the fury of a furnace is momentarily stayed by a sudden flood of water.

Pulling 'Black Baron' up sharply, Edgar let the drunken man get away ; enduring his loud yells and screams of triumph, amidst which ever and again was audible the word—'Convict,' 'Convict.'

"If he meet his death to-night," muttered Edgar, "it shan't come to him from my hand. No, no,—when he renders atonement to me, he shall have his full senses about him. If he is doomed to fall by my hand, it shall never be said that I killed him in a drunken brawl. Moreover, I must think of my duty to the old man,—a little longer,—a little longer."

But even as he uttered these words, his vengeful fury blazed up again,—as the flames of a furnace burst

up the fiercer and brighter for a momentary check. The villain's taunts and jeers rung again in his ears ; the cry of 'Convict,' 'Convict,' still floated through the air.

The thought seized the young Squire that a cut across the heath, on which he had just entered, would bring him up in less than five minutes with the man—whom he hated as some unclean beast,—the low, lying, vulgar cheat, whom even in his rage he would not honour with the name of enemy.

Turning upon the heath, in another instant Edgar was once more riding at full gallop. There was no moon above ; but the clear starlight showed 'Black Baron' and his rider the bridle-track over the wild sweep.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO DID IT?

CARRYING out the intention with which he had left the table of the Newton race dinner, Edgar Turrett slept at the Stanmore 'Griffin,' having ridden into that hostelry when his watch pointed to half an hour past midnight. The landlord was in bed, and the house at rest; but the shouts of the young Squire (who was well known at the tavern) caused the doors to be speedily opened.

"You can give me a bed?" inquired Edgar of the landlord, who received him.

"Ay, Squire Turrett. As luck has it, there's no one in the best bed."

"Where's Jack? My horse must be well attended to."

"Ord's, Squire! you have been riding hard; he *does* want seeing to, and no mistake!" returned the landlord, crossing the threshold of his inn, and laying his hand on Baron's neck. "He's all of a sweat."

"Ay, I have been riding I scarce know where. I intended to make a short cut over Fulbourne Heath, and the short cut turned out a very long one."

"I dessay, Squire; I dessay. Short cuts by night mostly is long ones. But here's Jack. Jack, take care o' the 'Baron,' and don't leave him till he's as dry as a bone. Squire Turrett thinks o' them as thinks of his hoss. Do you want supper, Squire?"

"No, nothing but a bed. Let me be called at seven o'clock, and have breakfast as soon as I am up."

"Surely, Squire."

Having inspected the stall assigned to 'Black Baron' in the 'Griffin' stables, and given Jack especial directions with regard to his horse, Edgar followed the landlord in-doors, and in less than twenty minutes was sound asleep in the 'best bed.'

The next morning Edgar left the 'Griffin' before 8 o'clock A.M.

At half-past 3 P.M. he dismounted in the stable-yard of the Hollow House.

"Has anything happened?" he inquired of his groom, who took charge of 'Black Baron.'

"Nothing, sir, that I've heard of," was the answer.

Having walked through the gardens, and entered 'the house' by the front door, Edgar encountered 'old Tom' in the hall, and put the same question to him.

"Has anything happened, Tom?"

"Nothing, sir, except the post-bag."

"How's my grandfather?"

"Just as ever, sir," answered the old Squire's faithful servant. "I dressed the Squire towards mid-day, and got him up, and gave him his dinner. Poor gentleman,—he don't know *me* now!"

"Where is he?"

"In the library, sir; in the old chair. He seems easier in the old chair than anywhere else."

Turning sadly away from the ancient domestic, Edgar opened the library door, and entering the room approached the chair in which the withered, bowed, mindless body of the aged Squire was wont to rest in a corner of his favourite seat. The time was past when Edgar could look for word or sign of recognition from the pitiable object to which senile decay had reduced the once 'rare Nan' of the Temple dining-hall. From force of old habit, he had crossed the library threshold to pay dutiful obeisance to the man who was careless alike of praise and blame. Had nothing caused him to depart from his customary line of action, he would have stood for a minute gazing with pitiful eyes at the veteran's stricken form and wasted face, and then have turned away,—leaving him in the darkness from which no human power could rescue him.

But on the present occasion the Squire's attitude and countenance roused in Edgar's mind new emotions. Usually the old man sat, chin and knees together, huddled in a heap, his back resting in an angle of his square chair, and his face bearing the pinched expression which usually marks old age when it is nipped by cold. Now it was otherwise. His body, having apparently slipped forwards, was in an almost recumbent position, the limbs extended, and the head fallen backwards. The pinched expression had left the face, and in the place of its chill misery there was a child-like softness—a beautiful serenity. Quickly applying his fingers to the old man's right wrist, Edgar sought the indication that the streams of life were still flowing.

The wrist was icy cold; the pulse had ceased to beat.

Hastily stepping back into the hall, where 'old Tom' still lingered, Edgar beckoned to the servant, and when he had come near, said in a low voice, "My grandfather is dead!"

Yes, death had come at last!

It only remained to bury the old man; and then Edgar would be at liberty to sell the estate, remove the name of Turrett from the list of the 'light land' gentry, and go away—where his shame could not find him.

That same night Edgar sent a note to Dr. Magnum, announcing the fact of his grandfather's death, and asking the physician to call upon him on Friday. He sent, also, a note to Mr. Loggett, the family solicitor, requesting his attendance on Saturday.

The Squire's death (it must be remembered) occurred on the Wednesday, within an hour of the time when Edgar entered the library, and found him no longer breathing. The Squire's trusted attendant had not left him an hour when Edgar reappeared in the Hollow House; and when he left his old master, Tom was certain that he was alive,—for he was then breathing the audible breaths of slumber.

On Thursday morning Edgar had an interview with the steward, and gave directions for his grandfather's funeral.

In the afternoon he was walking on the terrace, surveying the quiet garden, the lawn and shrubberies, the church-steeple peeping over the plantation,—when Dr. Magnum's chariot drove up to the hall door, and the physician alighted.

Hastening to receive him, Edgar had just time to shake him cordially, but in silence, by the hand; when a light open cart, containing two men, and drawn by a fast

horse, dashed up the drive, and stopped behind the chariot.

Springing from the cart, one of the men approached Edgar, and inquired, "You are Mr. Edgar Turrett, I believe, sir?"

"Yes,—what do you want?"

"I want you, sir. I am a constable, with a warrant for your arrest."

"To arrest me?" exclaimed Edgar, stepping back with surprise.

"Yes, sir, to arrest you,—and convey you to Sedgehassock castle."

"On what charge?"

"Murder, sir!"

"Murder!—Whose murder, man?"

"The murder of Alec Barber, the jockey and trainer, who was shot on Tuesday night at Fulbourne Banks. The coroner's jury have found a verdict that he was shot by you."

Turning with consternation to Dr. Magnum, Edgar exclaimed, "On my word of honour, I am innocent of this charge;—and I assure you that till this moment, I was ignorant of the scoundrel's death."

"Be cautious, Edgar," returned the physician, grasping his friend's hand. "Of course I believe you. But be cautious. Say nothing unguarded. Let us come indoors for a few minutes."

"I must be on my way to Sedgehassock, sir. Duty is duty," replied the constable.

Ay,—we will not detain you long. Mr. Turrett of course," returned Dr. Magnum, "will give you no difficulty;—but come indoors for a minute, and tell him what took place at the coroner's inquest, that made suspicion light on him. Respect his feelings!—his grandfather lies dead in the house!"

These last words, which were uttered in a low voice, that Edgar might not hear them, had such an effect on the officer of the law, that he complied with the request ; and the three men entered the library, leaving the constable's assistant, and Dr. Magnum's coachman, and the servants of the Hollow House (who had already assembled on the spot) to discuss the astounding intelligence.

On taking his seat in the library, Edgar had recovered something of his customary self-possession, and turning to the constable, who was an intelligent and respectable man, said firmly, " Of course you think me guilty. But for a few minutes be good enough to speak to me as if I were innocent, and tell me all that has taken place, just as you would tell it to any other listener. Tell Dr. Magnum. Speak to him. Begin at once,—for your time is valuable. You say—Alec Barber was shot on Tuesday night at Fulbourne Banks."

" Well, sir, it happened in this way," responded the constable, acting upon Edgar's suggestion and directing his words to Dr. Magnum. " Last Tuesday night, as it might be about eleven o'clock, Mr. Stephen Dowse, the banker of Merton-Piggott, was driving down Fulbourne Banks. He had just pulled his horse up at the brow of the hill, and was going to walk him down the steep, under the trees which made it very darksome like,—when, at bottom of the steep, as it might be three or four hundred yards below, he heard voices, and heard the word 'Turrett' uttered quite plain. In another instant a pistol was fired, and before he could well look about him, Mr. Turrett on his black horse galloped past him. Mr. Dowse knew him, dark as it was, and called out, ' In God's name, Mr. Turrett, what are you after !'

But Mr. Turrett didn't stop, but galloped right past him without ever a word."

"Ay,—go on," interposed Dr. Magnum.

"Well, sir,—all of a second afterwards, or it might be at the same time; leastways it was quicker than a dying man could pray to Grundy's ghost in—Mr. Alec Barber's horse and gig came tearing up the road at full gallop, and went bolt up against Mr. Dowse's chaise, whose horse turned sharp round, and blundered against the high bank. In a twinkling they were upset, as also was Alec Barber's horse and gig capsized. Then there was a row and a struggle. Mr. Dowse had a young man (one of his clerks) with him; and when they picked themselves up, and got the horses on their legs again, they found Alec Barber lying dead on the road;—but he was not killed by the fall, for he'd been shot through the head. Well, sir,—Mr. Dowse and his young clerk went as quick as they could to the village, which is a mile off, and gave the alarm, and then—"

"Very good, very good,—that's enough of the accident now.—Go on to the inquest," observed the physician, wishing to get at the facts which he knew Edgar most desired to hear.

"Well, sir,—the inquest took no long time. Dr. King proved as how the death was caused by the pistol shot. Mr. Dowse and his clerk (I forget the young man's name) both swore they recognized Mr. Turrett as he rode full speed past them; and Mr. Dowse also showed that Mr. Turrett and Mr. Alec Barber had had money dealings, which would give Mr. Turrett a motive for killing him. And what's more, sir,—in the road, under the trees, was found one of Mr. Turrett's pistols, with his name upon it. And so the jury found a verdict of

murder against the gentleman, and I am here on the King's service to apprehend him."

"Edgar,—were you at Fulbourne on Tuesday night?" inquired the doctor.

"I was in the parish," returned Edgar slowly, and with evident emotion, "I was in that long straggling parish, very near the time at which this awful scene occurred;—but I did not go within two miles of Fulbourne Banks. On my way home from Newton races, I turned on to Fulbourne Heath to make a short cut, and missing my way didn't reach Stanmore 'Griffin,' where I slept, till past midnight. Just before I turned on to the Heath, Barber passed me, yelling and roaring, evidently mad drunk.—But I had nothing to do with this fearful fray."

"It is a very awkward occurrence," observed Dr. Magnum, gravely.

"It is a very awkward occurrence," repeated Edgar in a hollow voice. And then he added, "God will take care of me;—at least, more care than I deserve."

For a space there was unbroken silence.

At length Edgar said, "Dr. Magnum, I must leave this place to-night,—immediately,—I may not even see——"

He could not utter what he wished to say; but the doctor knew what was in his thoughts, and made answer as if the sentence had been completed.

"Never mind,—never mind—leave everything to me. Possibly you will be able to obtain permission to return for such a purpose. Anyhow, trust to me. I will do all that you could do."

Turning to the constable, Edgar inquired the manner in which he would have to make the journey to Sedgessock.

The dignified resignation of the young Squire's tone and address roused the sympathy of the officer, though (as he afterwards confessed) the evidence given at the coroner's inquest left no doubt on his mind that Edgar was guilty of bloodshed.

"Sir," said the man, unconsciously paying homage to 'the quality' of his prisoner, "I have no conveyance but the open cart I came in. If you would prefer to travel in your own carriage, I have no objection to riding in it, only I must be inside with you, and my companion must sit by the side of your coachman. You must excuse my caution, sir—but I have a duty to perform."

"Thank you, thank you—that is what I meant," Edgar replied, with an effort; and after a pause, he added, whilst the crimson flashed into a face which had before been white as stone, "I see you will not make my degradation harder to bear than you can help.—And I thank you."

With these words, the young Squire was about to ring, and to order the old coach to be prepared for the long, mournful journey to Sedgehassock; when the doctor interposed, saying, "Better take my carriage, Edgar, as far as Merton-Piggott. I will accompany you. We can have a post-chaise from the Melford Arms meet us in my stable-yard, and so you can get away from the neighbourhood in which you are best known without creating any unnecessary disturbance."

With proper consideration, Edgar turned deferentially to the constable in whose custody he was, and by a look asked whether he approved the plan.

"I think the gentleman is right, sir," returned the man, on being thus mutely appealed to. "Of course I

had rather do my duty without giving you any pain whatsoever, sir;—but that can't be.—Impossible is impossible."

"Then," said Edgar, "since I must go, let us go at once. But first" (turning again to the constable) "can you permit me to have a few minutes' private conversation with this gentleman? You may trust me.—On my word, which I never yet gave to any man and broke, you may trust me! My grandfather, who lies dead upstairs, I should like to look at once more before I leave my house—a prisoner!"

"Sir," answered the honest fellow, with a brightness in his eye, "I feel I may trust you—and I *will* trust you. I'll sit here for an hour. Come back to me by the end of that time."

Again Edgar thanked his captor; and then rising from his seat rang the bell.

"Tom," he said, slowly and with apparent equanimity, when the old servant, in answer to the summons, made his appearance with a scared face, "you doubtless already know that a murder was perpetrated last Tuesday night at Fulbourne, not very many miles from Sedghassock, and circumstances (circumstances of a strangely suspicious aspect) point to me as the murderer. I need not tell you that I am innocent. But I stand accused of the crime, and I must forthwith go to Sedghassock with this constable, whose prisoner I now am. At the end of an hour I shall leave Castle Hollow in Dr. Magnum's carriage, and you will not see me here again till I am declared innocent. You needn't frighten yourself, my good old fellow;—I am in no danger. I want you now to attend to my orders. When I have left this house, you must pay the same obedience to Dr. Magnum's orders that you would pay to mine;—in

my absence the doctor will represent me. For the present, tell my groom to look well to this officer's horse, and then do you set proper refreshment out in this room for the constable and his assistant. I am now going up-stairs with Dr. Magnum to take a last look at your old master. Be a good fellow, Tom ; and don't speak a word. Obey me without a word—and God bless you!—If you speak, I shall break down."

With a low bow (which was a good substitute for the language of the tongue) 'old Tom,' without a word, left the room.

"And now," said Edgar, taking his watch from his pocket, and turning once more to the constable, "I will avail myself of your kind permission. It is now half-past four. When it is half-past five you will see me again in this room. Be good enough to partake of the refreshment my servant will bring you."

Thus liberated on parole for an hour, Edgar led Dr. Magnum to the drawing-room, which since Adelaide Turrett's death had been an almost disused room, and spoke to him more fully, but not less firmly, than he had spoken in the constable's presence.

"Dr. Magnum," he said, "I cannot disguise from myself that I am in a position of peril as well as degradation. The brief account which that civil man has given us of the proceedings at the inquest is enough to show me that I may find it very difficult to clear myself of this hideous charge. I was in Fulbourne on the night in question, and it is known that I was there ; but it would be utterly impossible for me to prove that I did not visit that part of the parish where the murder occurred. Mr. Dowse, I doubt not, can establish a case that I had ample motives for the crime ; and, indeed, if I told you all the secrets of my wretched life for some

time past, you would acknowledge that if ever circumstances could palliate the crime of murder, such extenuating circumstances would have surrounded the act,—had I shot that scoundrel Barber when he passed me on the Fulbourne turnpike-road the other night. That a pistol bearing my name was picked up close to the scene of crime will be a piece of circumstantial evidence against me, which I shall find it very difficult to meet: I doubt not the pistol fell from Barber's hand; for I remember that more than three years since I lent him a pistol as he was leaving King's Heath one dark night,—which weapon he never returned to me. But if I told that to any twelve jurymen, they would only laugh at me. Lastly, after losing my way on Fulbourne Heath, I found my way to the Stanmore 'Griffin,' where I slept;—but the hour at which I arrived there, and the state of my horse, would give countenance to the accusation. Throughout the night's ride, after Barber passed me on the road, I did not encounter a soul who could help me to prove that I did not go so far east as Fulbourne Banks."

"Have courage, Edgar; something will turn up to clear you."

"Doctor," returned the other, shaking his head sadly, "a curse hangs over me. There is an awful secret hanging over me—a fearful secret, which I may not tell you; but which, if you knew it, would cause your feeling heart to pity, not condemn me, for what you must deem the grave errors of my life. That scoundrel—the dead man, who has met a just doom—had an awful power over me. To escape him, I had resolved long since, on the death of my grandfather and aunt, to leave this country. I have been secretly laying plans to begin life again—life with worthier views and purposes

—in a foreign land. When I saw my dear grandfather dead in his chair yesterday, my first thoughts were, ‘Now I am free; now I can go and begin life again.’”

Edgar paused, and then, with pathetic emotion he added, “Dear doctor, I know the evil men say of me. They call me libertine, gambler, spendthrift; I tell you *they lie*! They say I broke my dear Aunt Adelaide’s heart, and treated her with neglect and brutality in her last illness;—in that, *you* know that *they lie* foully, wickedly.—Oh! dear old friend,—don’t believe the evil you hear of me;—have faith in me;—you knew me when I was a happy, careless schoolboy at Merton-Piggott. Remember what I then was,—and, believe me, I have a solid kernel of goodness still left in me!”

“Edgar,” said the doctor with manly emotion, wringing the young Squire’s hand, “I believe you. God bless you! Whatever evil may befall you, I will believe your words.”

The friends spoke further; but what they said there is no need to tell the reader, as it related only to Edgar’s wishes with regard to his grandfather’s funeral, and the domestic arrangements of the Hollow House during his sojourn at Sedgehassock.

Then the young Squire conducted Dr. Magnum to the chamber where his grandfather lay, still and calm, and ready for the tomb—having lived it down.

At half-past five they returned to the library, when Edgar said to the constable, “I am ready to accompany you. Let us start at once. Dr. Magnum will accompany us as far as Merton-Piggott. Since I am prisoner, if it is a necessary part of your duty to secure me with handcuffs, I—I—am ready to wear them.”

“Squire,” exclaimed the man gruffly, quite overcome by his prisoner’s bearing, “I can trust you; I

have heard of you (evil and good), and, hang me, if so long as you're my prisoner—I don't think only of the good! You did a generous turn long since to a brother of mine, who was a poor tradesman at Cambridge."

Whereupon the tears sprang to Edgar's eyes—for the soft side of his nature was touched, and he shook the man's hand warmly.

"You see, Squire," continued the man, "I only want to do my duty—and a gentleman's word will help me to do that, better than steel fetters. My assistant here will take the horse and cart home. At Merton-Piggott we can get a post-chaise, and drive off, so that nobody will take note of us."

As the clock of St. Mary's church was striking seven, Dr. Magnum's chariot drew up before his door, in Abbey Place, Merton-Piggott; and ere the chimes had marked the flight of another quarter of an hour, Edgar and the constable were travelling along the Sedgehassock road, in a post-chaise, with all speed that four horses and liberal fees to postilions could command.

The hours of that journey were hours of strong emotions to the young Squire.

Days when he had made the same journey to the great cathedral town of the 'light lands,' for ball, or concert, or public dinner; days when he had ridden along a portion of the same road to hunt-meets, or to King's Heath—flitted before him. Incidents—mere trifles, scarcely noted at the times of their occurrence—connected with the wayside taverns, the towns and villages, the features of the open landscape, crowded thick upon his recollection. The summer's sun went down in golden glory, and the stars came forth in the everlasting heavens. Then the prisoner threw himself back

in a corner of the carriage, and mused on all the events of his later years—his love for Carry Bromhead; the death and blessing of the gentle Adelaide Turrett, whose last words were, “My blessing be with you, dear! O God, guard him! Out of Thy mercy keep him from evil! Out of Thy mercy bring him up to Thy everlasting heaven!” He thought of his grandfather, and that silent room where he lay in the Hollow House; he thought, too, of the murdered man, who had lived his life of fraud and crime down to a violent end.

CHAPTER XVII.

PUBLIC OPINION.

A FEARFUL murder had been committed.

The victim was a King's Heath betting man. Alexander Barber, of Little Deane, near Easthaven, The murderer was Edgar Antony Turrett, Esquire, of the Hollow House, Castle Hollow.

The news ran through the 'light lands' as fire runs over a prairie.

Within forty-eight hours the Fulbourne murder was a topic of conversation at every dinner-table in London. By the end of a week every newspaper in the kingdom was busy with it. A gentleman of landed estate and ancient family ; a gentleman of education, who held a Cambridge fellowship—had met at midnight, in a lonely road, a man who had outwitted him in turf speculations. The gentleman had waylaid his victim, and shot him dead. Such a murder had not been perpetrated for years. The murderer a gentleman, the murdered man only slightly removed from the very humblest ranks of

society. The evidence of the crime was conclusive ; the motive for it clear. It would remain a memorable event in the romance of crime.

Every noisy tongue throughout the 'light lands' was let loose against the perpetrator of the bloody deed. Imagination painted him a cruel villain, of the deepest dye of villany. His debts, his vicious habits, his addiction to low company, were enlarged upon. He had plundered and killed his maiden aunt ; he had kept an infirm grandfather a prisoner in the hands of menials ; he had for years been familiar with the worst cliques of King's Heath gamblers ; he was an open blasphemer and scoffer at religion.

The 'light lands' cried aloud for blood,—their arid, sandy sweeps thirsting for it. The question was raised, how the old Squire (the murderer's grandfather) had died on the very day after the Fulbourne crime. Rumour questioned, hinted, murmured with a deepening murmur, until a demand was made for a coroner's inquest to ascertain the cause of the old man's death ; and on the day which had been fixed for the funeral, the coroner of the district held an inquest at Castle-Hollow, which, in consequence of Dr. Magnum's emphatic testimony, ended in a verdict "That the deceased Antony Turrett died from natural causes." But notwithstanding this verdict, and the physician's evidence that the Squire had for years suffered under an affection of the heart (so that it was to be wondered the aged gentleman had lasted so long), public opinion was not satisfied, and the prisoner in Sedgehassock Castle knew that he was believed capable of an even more revolting crime than that of which he had been formally accused. Even the ancient connection of his family with the medical profession, and the fact that he had

years ago taken a physician's degree at Cambridge (for the purpose of holding his ancestor's fellowship) were made additional reasons in support of the suspicion that he had used poison to put an end to his grandfather's protracted life. Indeed, while the blood-panic lasted, there was nothing of evil which the credulous and ignorant were not ready to believe of him. "They were all gradduwaytes," the gossiping crones and nurses of the light-land villages said to one another. "The Turretts, ever since there war Turretts, allus had learning, and war gradduwaytes. The young Squire hisself is a gradduwayte, and knows as well as e'er a paid doctor in the land what'll kill, and what'll make to live; and when he sold hisself to the devil,—of course, what mattered putting the old 'un to death? You may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb?"

Even amongst the enlightened members of the town-club, the suspicion had many upholders.

"Ah," said Timothy Tilcot, "their learning has cost the Turretts dear."

"Well, well," interposed Mr. Steed, speaking authoritatively on a medical subject, "the old gentleman died of heart disease. Dr. Magnum says so,—and on such a point, there isn't a better opinion in all the faculty. And the jury found, 'Death from natural causes.' Now a man can't die of heart disease one time, and poison at another. No man can be killed twice,—whatever it may be with cats."

"Mr. Steed, since the young Squire is of your order, so to speak," returned Timothy, "it is only natural that you should speak a good word for him. Still, to think that the young 'un gave the poor old Squire poison, and to hold that the poor gentleman had heart disease too, ain't just the same as killing him twice over. How can

you prove he didn't die o' both at the same time? I have been in the wine trade, gentlemen, in which, as in all trades, there are tricks ;—and when I hear of a man having drunk himself to death, says I to myself, 'Then let's be fair, and put down six to wine and spirits, and half-a-dozen to what is put in 'em.'"

At which point of the discussion, when the laughter caused by Mr. Tilcot's *naïve* revelations of the state of the wine-trade had subsided, the agricultural mind of Mr. Moss threw forth the well-timed suggestion that there was "nothing like John Barleycorn," adding as an explanatory affix to his sentiment, "For, gentlemen, he warms you in the winter, and he cools you in the summer, and—he frisks you up when it's betwixt and between."

"But Dr. Magnum made a 'post-mortem,'" exclaimed Mr. Steed, neglecting to give due applause to Mr. Moss's suggestion, "and though the heart accounted for death, there wasn't a trace of poison to be found in the body."

"Fiddlesticks with the post-mortem!" retorted Mr. Tilcot, with much warmth. "I am not going to have 'post-mortem'—'post-mortem'—'post-mortem'—flung in my teeth. What is the meaning of 'post-mortem'?—it's nothing more than the Greek word for 'it's all up.'—I am as well educated as other people, sir!—I beg you to remember I've been in the wine-trade, sir!"

"There's a good deal in what you say, Mr. Tilcot," observed Stephen Dowse, taking his pipe from his mouth, and bringing his heavy face and stupendous intellect to bear on the speakers and their discussion, "but you mayn't ride a good hobby to death. A post-mortem is a useful thing in its way, but it wont do for intelligent men to be post-mortem-ridden any more than priest-

ridden. It's a ticklish question, whether or no the young Squire, who's as good as proved a murderer, practised on the old Squire's life ;—and it's a question which I am thankful to know I am not called upon to decide. That's all I say. It's a very—very ticklish question !”

“ You think so, Mr. Dowse ?” exclaimed half-a-dozen auditors at the same time, turning to the bank-agent, who, since the adventure at Fulbourne, had risen even higher in the estimation of the ‘ town-club.’

“ Stephen Dowse always thinks what he says, gentlemen. I don't say that he doesn't think a good deal more than he says sometimes, when it's his duty to be close. ‘ Close and sure’ is my motto ; if I hadn't been close and sure, I shouldn't be where I am. I don't suppose anyone here will contradict me when I say that I know as much as most people how affairs stand with a certain person who's to take his trial shortly on a charge of murder ; and I needn't say that some of my knowledge is not of the most recent date.—But at present I don't talk ;—you've heard (or read, which is tantamount to the same thing) my evidence before the coroner's jury. And in a short time you'll hear my evidence at Sedgessock. But at present I feel it my duty to be close !—Still on the post-mortem question, which, as our most distinguished jurists express it, is no longer *coram judice*, I may say that in my humble opinion it is—a very ticklish question !”

“ Mr. Dowse,” inquired Mr. Mivvot, a new member, burning for further intelligence, “ what would you have done if, instead of riding past you, the murderer had grappled with you ?”

“ Mr. Mivvot,” answered Stephen Dowse, with impressive gravity, “ you are a new member, and a com-

parative stranger to the town, or you would not have put that question. What should I have done, sir? Sir, I should have done my duty, as the Dowses have always done their duty."

But in one true, brave, faithful heart, the ignominy of Edgar Turrett's position, and the calumny that surged against him, were powerless to deaden love, or diminish confidence. Never for an instant did Carry believe that he had committed the murder. She did not defend him with her lips, at the bar of public opinion. Even where her small, silvery voice might have spoken with effect against the loud tongues of his accusers, she was silent,—leaving it to the just God to clear him of the fearful charge, and meekly accepting his evil fortune as her own sorrow,—as another affliction sent by a wise Providence to wean *her* yet more from earthly cares, to make *him* a humble suitor for that support without which all human strength is ineffectual.

Neither to Martha nor her guardian did she utter a word on the subject about which they were constantly speaking. But daily she read every exaggerated statement, baseless slander, cruel inference that appeared in the public journals; and daily, when she had perused the evil which subtle reason, and malevolence, and terror said of the man whose earthly honour was far dearer to her than her own, she said meekly, "Father,—Thy will be done! In Thy good time Thou wilt show his innocence, and shame his thoughtless traducers!"

Secret grief made no difference in the zeal and completeness with which she discharged her Christian duties. "Clearly, she has outlived all tenderness for the ruffian," whispered the loungers of the Assembly Rooms, "for, you see, she is going about just as if nothing had hap-

pened." Indeed, Mrs. Richard Camberwell was scandalized at what she was pleased to term the 'utter heartlessness' of John Bromhead's daughter. "She might," observed Mrs. Richard, "at least have had the decency to keep herself indoors till the trial and execution were over." But instead of paying regard to Mrs. Camberwell's feelings, Carry went forth punctually each day to Mr. Reeve's schools, and to the district of which she was an appointed visitor, caring nought what idle gossip said of her,—indeed, never suspecting that idle gossip was busy with what she did, or left undone, during that darkest period of Edgar's shame and anguish.

To one person alone did her private, hidden, unutterable woe change her. If the rector entered the girls' school when she was busy at her class, her heart beat fast, and she looked anywhere rather than where her eye might catch his. So also in St. Mary's church, though consolation and even gladness (gladness that had no kinship with worldly joy) came to her from his sermon, she could no longer turn her face upwards to his. And corresponding grief and embarrassment for days and weeks kept him away from her. She dared not look at him; and he dared not attempt to give her words of comfort.

Once, and only once, during the time between Edgar Turrett's committal and trial, did Carry and the rector exchange words. Accidentally meeting her, at the close of a summer evening, as she was crossing Abbey Place on her way home from the 'poor quarter,' the rector, speaking at the risk of paining her, since silence would unquestionably have caused her discomfort, took her hand and said, "My dear friend, I have not called at your house for these many days, because I have felt that my presence there would perplex rather than cheer you.

But believe me, I think of you very often, and as often I pray for you."

"Mr. Reeve, Mr. Reeve," said Carry, in a tremulous voice, "forget me, forget me, do not give a thought to *me*. Think of some one else. Oh, pray for *him*!"

"My dear Miss Bromhead," was the simple answer, "I never think of you apart from him. My constant prayers for you are also prayers for *him*."

Having said which few earnest words, Mr. Reeve went away, leaving the patient girl much relieved by what had passed between them.

But one friend Carry Bromhead had in Merton-Piggott, to whom she could speak with greater freedom of her sorrow and shame;—yes, her shame! for Edgar's ignominy was hers. To Mrs. Magnum she maintained no reserve. 'Conversion' had not lessened the closeness of intimacy which had subsisted between the two women, from the time when the mistress of Bassingbourne House first extended her kindly patronage to the merchant's pretty child;—and now that affectionate intercourse was to Carry a fountain of consolation.

"Oh, Fanny," exclaimed the girl, with a passionate flood of tears, "*they* said he killed Aunt Adelaide; that wicked accusation we know to be false! They said he killed his grandfather;—that wicked accusation was *proved* to be false. And of this crime which they now lay to his charge he is just as innocent. God will prove it."

"Darling," was the friend's firm answer, "let us be patient. We know him to be innocent. Our Heavenly Father will prove him so. We must be patient, and constant in prayer."

Thus while all the world rose in arms against the

accused man, these two good, faithful women were true to him. In every hall and cottage of the 'light lands' there was hope that swift punishment would fall on the blood-stained Squire who 'had sold his soul to the devil;' but in the quiet chambers where angels watched the sleep of Fanny Magnum and Carry Bromhead, Edgar's name found place in faithful prayers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIR WEEDEL CLASPETT'S TWELVE FRIENDS.

DURING the weeks which intervened between his committal and trial, Edgar Turrett received but few visitors, and to them he displayed cautious reserve. By the journals the public learnt that he steadily persisted in declaring his innocence of the murder which the clearest evidence had fixed upon him; and the newspapers failed not to remark that this obstinate persistence in asseverations of innocence had characterized the demeanour of many criminals who had suffered death for the gravest crime of which humanity is capable. As the time for the assizes drew near, Mr. Loggett urged upon the accused man the propriety of engaging an efficient counsel to advise him on the points of law and evidence that would occur in the course of his trial; but as often as the solicitor gave this advice, the young Squire expressed his resolution not to have recourse to such legal aid. "Let every fact be brought against me," Edgar said to his solicitor, "and let the facts tell their own story." From which decision the world

drew the charitable inference that the accused had not sufficient courage to admit a barrister to that full confidence which lawyers retained to advise Crown prisoners expected from their clients.

When the assizes opened, Sedgehassock was unusually full of visitors. From every quarter of the 'light lands' the gentry and commonalty had flocked to the cathedral city, that they might be present at the trial, or at least be in the immediate vicinity of the court in which it was carried forward; and in addition to the habitual residents of the surrounding country, numbers had come from more remote parts of the kingdom, anxious to witness a judicial inquiry which was an object of universal interest amongst all classes of the prisoner's countrymen.

The trial commenced on the first day after the opening of assize.

Before the judge took his seat, every square foot of standing-room in the court was occupied, and all the avenues leading to the scene of interest were densely crowded. Outside the court there were conflicting rumours,—that the trial would last over many days, that it would be over in a few hours, that even at the last moment the prisoner would astonish the world by pleading guilty, that circumstances had transpired which would lead to the postponement of the case for another day, or a subsequent assize. Within,—there was an anxious silence, broken every now and then by a hum of expectation, as the javelin-bearers, stationed at the doors, cautiously opened them from time to time, to afford ingress or egress to the lawyers and officers of the court, for whom places were reserved. On the benches appropriated to the grand jury and their friends, were several ladies of rank and wealth and high position

amongst the aristocracy of the 'light lands.' The members of the bar were present in great force, and as they waited for the appearance of the judge,—reading their morning papers, whispering, smirking, and smiling,—they shocked unsophisticated spectators by the levity and carelessness with which they seemed to regard the grave business of the day.

At length his lordship appeared, attended by the high sheriff and the chief personages of the county,—whereupon every spectator provided with a seat rose to render due homage to the King's representative,—and every spectator not so provided, looked about him in the vain hope of being able to edge himself upon the corner of a bench.

Before the commotion caused by 'My Lud's' appearance had subsided, the prisoner stood in the presence of judge, and jury, and crowded court. It was observed that he made a slight movement of respect to the eminent lawyer who was about to preside at his trial, and then calmly surveyed the dense assembly of faces that were directed to him. Amongst them he discerned many of his former private acquaintance,—and a few of those whom he had counted in the list of his familiar friends. If the thought occurred to him, that gentle feeling ought to have kept them away from the scene of his degradation, it had no influence on the expression of his countenance, which was calm and dignified,—though the mental agony of the preceding weeks was visible in the lines of his stern and pallid face.

A few more minutes, and the names of twelve jurors (to none of whom the prisoner made objection) were called over, and in succession each of them took the required oath.

The jury consisted of the following freeholders* :—

Name and Occupation.	Distinguishing Peculiarities.
1. Matthew Allen. Grocer.	{ Stout, fresh-coloured man; about 50 years of age, but wearing powder and queue, and dressed in costume of the preceding generation.
2. Charles Atterbury. Wine-merchant.	{ Short, stumpy, and middle-aged; obstinate and choleric.
3. John Braddock. Bookseller & Stationer.	{ (Mr. Braddock's peculiarities are already known to the reader).
4. Samuel Clitheroe. Maltster.	{ Remarkable for utter vacuity of expression: his round face closely resembling a large red wafer pressed by a giant's thumb.
5. Amos Clarke. Farmer.	{ Decidedly an agriculturist, priding himself on belonging to the old school. During the greater part of the trial he was in a state of profound slumber.
6. Albert Duggan. Chemist and Druggist.	{ Conspicuous by white waistcoat, blue satin stock, and the crisp curls of his flaxen hair, over which he continually passed a jewelled hand.
7. James Easter. Upholsterer.	{ An intelligent juryman, who asked many questions, for the sake of showing his own sagacity.
8. William Frogmore. Grocer.	{ A morbidly conscientious juryman, who asked many questions for the sake of doing his duty to society.
9. Frederick Gusterby. Farmer.	{ Agriculturist of a 'new school.' Thin, six feet high, solemn of aspect, and a wearer of spectacles.
10. Ephraim Hedgestake. Architect.	{ A note-taking juryman, who always shook his head, and took a note, whenever the judge shook his wig, or put pen to paper.

* The critical reader will be good enough to remember the date of the trial.

11. Peter Horseman.
Grocer.

{ A discontented juryman, who throughout the trial kept his eyes fixed on the court clock, and repeatedly asked himself why a tradesman in a free country should be compelled to serve as a juryman without payment.

12. Nathaniel Fowler.
Draper.

{ Juryman of nervous organization, who steadily ate peppermints throughout the entire course of the investigation, and did his best to keep Mr. Amos Clarke awake, by nudging him with elbow, and growling, "His lordship's a-looking at you again."

Not long since a distinguished criminal advocate said that on circuit, in all trials for capital offences, it was his rule to challenge every name on the jury-list, until he came to a grocer. Having secured one grocer for his client he desisted from challenging, and left the selection of the remaining eleven of the jury to routine. "In rural districts," observed the learned counsel, giving a reason for his method of practice, "a large majority of the grocers are dissenters, and dissenters are strongly opposed to the punishment of death. A dissenter in a jury box is a strong power in favour of a prisoner whose life is in danger." But in 1824, a man accused of murder could look neither to grocers nor dissenters for salvation from the halter. Whatever feeling existed against capital punishment for minor offences, the opinion prevailed in all sections of society that hanging was but too good a death for the shedder of blood. It may not therefore be inferred that the presence of three grocers amongst the twelve intelligent gentlemen of the box contributed to Edgar Turrett's chances of obtaining an acquittal. -

The prosecution had been entrusted to Sir Weedel Claspett, K.C., Attorney-General, Mr. Serjeant Antrobus, and Mr. Arthur Spillbridge. The prisoner had declined to accept the guidance of counsel.

The jury had taken their oaths, the prisoner had in clear, decided tones pleaded "not guilty," Mr. Arthur Spillbridge had told "my lud" and the "gentlemen of the jewar" the nature of the offence with which Edgar Turrett (the prisoner in the dock) stood charged, and Mr. Serjeant Antrobus had risen with stern determination in his countenance to discharge his duty to the public; when (as the members of the bar well knew would be the case)—there was a tap at the counsel's door, the door was opened, and—the attorney-general entered. It was Sir Weedel Claspett's rule never to appear in court before he was wanted; it was equally his rule never to be absent when he was wanted.

A small, slight, delicate man—under five feet six inches in height, with wig well powdered, and gown of unworn silk; sleek and cunning as to his face, with tiny red whiskers, accurately trimmed, contrasting with the whiteness of his wig, and adding to the foxy effect of his general appearance,—Sir Weedel was a man to be looked at and studied. He was no ordinary barrister, no ordinary King's counsel, no ordinary attorney-general. Indeed, there was nothing commonplace about the diminutive leader of the common-law bar. Sir Weedel had founded a new school of forensic eloquence. Before he appeared in the long-robed army, no advocate thought of addressing a jury of twelve intelligent jurymen without indulging in thunder, bluster, and coarse adulation. Sir Weedel Claspett never thundered, never blustered; and his flattery was

of the subtlest and most delicate kind. When Sir Weedel first commenced his career, the old stagers of the criminal and common law courts did not hesitate to predict failure for the youthful advocate, who, declining to imitate the leaders of his profession, never raised his voice above the loudness necessary for rendering his words audible to those whom he addressed,—and who, in cases on which the orators of the old school expended floods of invective, ostentatiously proclaimed his intention not to strengthen his case by appealing to the feelings of his hearers. For a time the innovator had few clients, and many adverse critics; but as years went on, it was discovered that his quiet, impassive, confidential wheedling was of more effect with juries than were the stormy harangues of his elders. Attorneys and solicitors began to say, “After all, Mr. Weedel Claspett is the winning horse. He has such a carneying, insinuating, wheedling way,—that thunder and balderdash have no chance with him.”

So briefs grew in number, and fees in size. Treating a constituency of enlightened electors in the same way as he had consistently treated innumerable dozens of enlightened jurymen, Mr. Weedel Claspett wheedled himself into the House of Commons, and having sidled himself to a seat among Britain’s legislators, he wheedled himself into the confidence of the ministry, and the office of attorney-general.

“My lud,” said Sir Weedel Claspett, confidently pitching the words into his lordship’s lap, as he might have pitched ‘my lud’ a bon-bon.

“Gentlemen of the jury,” observed Sir Weedel, lowering his voice, and with his right hand pulling his gown higher up on his shoulders.

For half-a-minute Sir Weedel was silent, when he

made a movement with his head (a movement which may be described as an inverted nod,—it was a slight, quick turn of the face upwards) and extending the right hand, pointed first at the jury-box, and then at his own far from stupendous person.

Which by-play caused the jurymen to understand that they and Sir Weedel Claspett were to help each other, trust each other, know each other familiarly,—forget that any one was in court besides themselves and their peculiar advocate, Sir Weedel Claspett. The pantomime implied that Sir Weedel would prefer having his beloved jurymen closer to him,—sitting round him,—sitting at his feet. So affected were Mr. Ephraim Hedgestake and Mr. Frederick Gusterby, they for an instant thought of quitting their appointed places in the box, and coming closer to the fascinating Sir Weedel.

Seeing that the arrangements of the court rendered it impossible for him to have the jury closer to him, Sir Weedel permitted them to sit where they were, and forbore to beckon to them again.

Then Sir Weedel Claspett went to work, saying in small, delicate utterances—as though he were speaking to a party of intimate friends in his own dining-room in Russell Square,

“Gentlemen of the jury,—you have already been informed, in his usual lawyer-like manner, by my young friend, Mr. Spillbridge, what the crime is with which the prisoner in the dock stands accused. It remains for *us*, for *us*, gentlemen of the jury, to examine the facts which tend to fix the guilt of murder on the wretched,—fallen man. I need not tell you that I have carefully considered those facts, and it would be rather premature for me to tell you at present that they leave

no doubt on my mind that Alexander Barber was, on the night of —— last, cruelly murdered by Edgar Turrett; of Castle Hollow. I should wish you to arrive at your own conclusion, not to accept mine. We will examine the evidence together,—and as we do so, I shall take the liberty of pointing out to you what I consider to be its most important points, and I shall endeavour so to discharge my duty,—that you may feel that *we* are working together. As I proceed, I do most sincerely trust that you will act towards me in the same spirit. Of course I can have no desire to secure the prisoner's conviction if he be innocent. You, also, of course can have no such desire. What *we* want is truth,—what we desire is justice,—and I am inclined to think that when thirteen men labour honestly to find out the truth of a question, success usually attends their labours. On the present occasion *we* will labour honestly.

“We will also not allow passion to disturb our judgment. For a brief time we will forbear to shudder at the hideous nature of the crime, and like calm, practical, business men, look only at the facts, which indicate—*prove*, I might say—that the prisoner was its perpetrator.”

Having made this exordium, Sir Weedel Claspett looked at his brief, and turning to Mr. Serjeant Antrobus, held the following conversation in whispers with that learned lawyer.

Sir Weedel Claspett—“How long did you keep it up last night?”

Mr. Serjeant Antrobus—“Oh! not very late. I got into bed at five o'clock this morning.”

Sir Weedel Claspett—“Cards better after I left?”

Mr. Serjeant Antrobus—“No,—bad luck the whole way through.”

Sir Weedel Claspett—"Dear me! Where do you dine to-day?"

Mr. Serjeant Antrobus—"At mess."

Sir Weedel Claspett—"Come and dine with me?"

Mr. Serjeant Antrobus—"Very good. Six o'clock?"

Sir Weedel Claspett—"Sharp,—I have two other men coming."

Mr. Serjeant Antrobus—"Rubber afterwards?"

Sir Weedel Claspett—"Of course."

A pause, during which the attorney-general again looked at his brief; after which examination he resumed his address to his particular friends in the jury box.

"Before we entered on our examination, gentlemen, I was anxious to get one or two facts from my learned friend,—who is with me in the case.

"Gentlemen of the jury,—Of the dead man, Alexander Barber, all that we shall learn will tend to show that he was a bad Christian, a bad citizen, a bad man. I will not undertake to sketch the career of a notorious King's Heath cheat and blackleg, whose entire life was devoted to the petty frauds and mean rascalities which are too common amongst the lowest classes of those who are designated turf-men. It is enough for me to say that evil report surrounds every step of his course. Years since he was discharged with ignominy from the service of Lord Taranflit, who has long been honourably distinguished for his enlightened patronage of the turf and of dramatic art; but in consequence of a misapprehension of the facts of the case, the Snaffle Club did not deem it necessary to exclude the discarded trainer from that participation in their noble sport which they generously allow to the ordinary public. About the same time, the discarded trainer married a

young lady who was for many years alike admired and respected by all those inhabitants of the 'light lands' who give countenance to their local theatres. This amiable and accomplished woman survives her ill-starred and unworthy husband. At one time I thought it would be necessary for us to examine her in court this day ; but I have come to the conclusion that the ends of justice do not require us to call her from the retirement in which she conceals her wretchedness ; in having come to which conclusion, I feel I may rely on your approval,—when you hear that the exemplary and brilliant lady who has charmed you by her genius, as a writer not less than as an actress, has been so borne down by the last calamity of her unhappy married life, that not only is her health broken, but her very existence is in danger.—She, gentlemen, is a worthy object of that commiseration and tenderness which morality forbids us to lavish on the man the circumstances of whose violent death we are assembled here to investigate !”

Sir Weedel Claspett then proceeded, in the same smooth and ingratiating voice, to describe the intercourse which had subsisted between the dead man and his murderer,—telling how the young Squire had first employed Alec Barber as jockey ; how he had then treated him as familiar associate and friend ; how the two strangely assorted companions had speculated on the turf in partnership ; how by degrees the dead man had gained a mysterious influence over the man of wealth, ultimately reducing him from the position of patron to that of slave ; how in consequence of this mysterious influence,—by what means gained, it was no part of his (Sir Weedel Claspett's) province to conjecture,—the heir to a landed estate (by no means a large estate) had been induced

to borrow sums of money, which he had paid to the man who was at the same time his creature and his tyrant; how at length struggling to release himself from a degrading bondage, the prisoner (Edgar Turrett) had in a paroxysm of fury felled to the ground (at the Gedgrave 'Horseshoes'—an inn on the other side of the 'light lands') the man whom he was subsequently to murder; how at a date after this display of violence Edgar Turrett—most probably (though Sir Weedel Claspett would be sorry to suggest aught that did not appear on face of the evidence) under fear that his accomplice in some turf iniquity, some knavish enterprise, which, if it were revealed to the world, would cover both of them with ignominy,—had positively given the dead man a bond, securing to him an annuity of £300 until the death of the prisoner's grandfather, and on that death the payment of £6,000 sterling; how an important feature of his bond—executed *after* the outbreak at the Gedgrave Horseshoes was a provision that it should become void, in case Alexander Barber pre-deceased the giver of the bond, or that giver's grandfather. It would therefore be seen that by depriving Alexander Barber of life, the prisoner saved himself from the necessity of paying the large sum of £6,000 sterling. Far be it from him (Sir Weedel Claspett) to say that this fact was the only motive in the present case to the hideous crime of bloodshed. He would merely say that such a fact relieved him from the necessity of searching for a motive. Murders, alas! had ere then been perpetrated with less motive. But as practical men, he (Sir Weedel Claspett) and the jurymen would rather accept the bond as merely indicating that the prisoner had grave reason for wishing to send his victim speedily to another world. He would still adhere to his resolu-

tion not to suggest what he himself could not do otherwise than believe was the real motive. He would leave the jury to arrive at their own conclusion ; but still he would venture to ask them a few questions. There was no consideration stated in the bond. But could anyone believe that such a bond was given without consideration ? What could that consideration have been ? Was it credible that such a sum, as the bond represented, was ever due—for money lent, or honest services—from a man occupying the position which the prisoner then held, to a bankrupt, betting black-leg ? If there had been any such consideration, why was it not stated in the bond ? If the jury came to the conclusion that the consideration was one which the prisoner had not even dared to mention in a secret document, intended only for his own eyes and those of his accomplice, it would be for them (not for him, Sir Weedel Claspett) to conjecture what that consideration might be,—whether the consideration was a promise of silence with regard to some guilty transaction that would not bear the light,—or whether it was not. Anyhow they would bear in mind that a hateful knave had by some means or other extorted that bond from the prisoner ; and with that fact before them, they could not doubt that the prisoner must have earnestly desired the death of the man who had such power over him. Possibly the prisoner, in his defence, would give some explanation,—some statement of the circumstances which induced him to give that bond. Possibly such statement would be worthy the credence of practical business men ;—possibly it would not. But in case it were, the jury would still see sufficient motive to the commission of the crime, in the fact that the prisoner, by means of the murder, was liberated from the direct engagements of the bond.

The question of motive having been thus disposed of, Sir Weedel Claspett went on to describe the circumstances of the murder ; how on the morning preceding the murder, the prisoner and his victim met on their way to the Newton races ; how a most important and respectable witness (Mr. Stephen Dowse, of Merton-Piggott) had come upon them as they were engaged in altercation ; how they both attended Newton races ; how the prisoner, after being present at the race dinner, left Newton at a late hour in the evening, and rode forth in the darkness to waylay his unsuspecting victim ; how he encountered him at the Fulbourne Banks, and shot him ; how the same witness already mentioned (Mr. Stephen Dowse, the respected—indeed, the eminent bank-agent of Merton-Piggott), on his journey from one town, whither he had been on business, to another town, where the affairs of Messrs. Crabtree, Scuttle and Co. required his attendance, was, at foot-pace, driving down the Benton Banks at eleven or half-past eleven p.m., when he heard loud and angry exclamations,—heard the words ‘Squire Turrett’ uttered,—heard the report of fire-arms,—heard a horse galloping up the hill towards him,—recognized in the rider of that horse the prisoner, Edgar Turrett,—even hastily called out to him, and, addressing him by name, exclaimed, “God bless me ! Mr. Turrett, what are you after ?”—how the prisoner, giving no answer, rode past at full gallop ; how in a twinkling Alec Barber’s horse and gig came in collision with Mr. Dowse’s chaise ; how both vehicles were upset, and in another minute Mr. Dowse, and his clerk, Mr. Winyard, were standing over the lifeless body of Alexander Barber, who had been shot through the head, when he was in the valley at the foot of the

Banks; how the murdered man must have been shot as he sat in his gig, and must have then been carried up the hill, until his gig came in collision with Mr. Dowse's four-wheeled chaise; how the next morning one of the prisoner's pistols—bearing his name, and bought by him of a King's Heath gunsmith, who would in due course be put in the box—was picked up on the ground, close to the spot where the murder was perpetrated. Of course, there was no need for Sir Weedel Claspett to suggest to the jury that, in his hurried flight, this pistol had been dropped by the murderer, ere he rode past Mr. Dowse, and was recognized by that gentleman. It was needless for Sir Weedel Claspett to make any such suggestion; but it was incumbent on him to tell the jury that Mr. Dowse's clerk—a most intelligent young man, who had behaved during the fray and collision with perfect presence of mind—corroborated his master's testimony in every particular, and that he also recognized the prisoner as he galloped past them.

“And now, gentlemen,” observed Sir Weedel Claspett, in conclusion, lowering his voice to a tone of cooing, dove-like gentleness, and smiling on his twelve friends in the jury-box, “we have performed the first part of our duty to the public. We have taken a general survey of the facts of the case, and I think I may say *we* have done so calmly, dispassionately, and carefully. The second part of our labour will be to examine the witnesses, and see how far their evidence supports our present impressions. In this portion of our task, we shall receive the valuable assistance of my learned brother, Mr. Serjeant Antrobus, and my young but learned friend, Mr. Spillbridge. But as the clock is already pointing to half-past twelve, and as I am

familiar with that delicate consideration which 'my lud' always displays for the feelings of the members of the bar, and for the feelings of gentlemen of the jury, who on public grounds come forward to the assistance of my beloved profession—I think it not improbable that 'my lud' will grant us permission to retire for a few minutes, for purposes of refreshment, before we call our witnesses."

Whereupon Sir Weedel Claspett slowly took his eyes from his twelve friends, and, looking to the bench, said, "My lud,—we are in your hands."

Whereupon 'my lud' frankly admitted that Sir Weedel Claspett's suggestion quite met his views, and accorded with what he conceived to be the fitness of things.

Whereupon the gentlemen of the bar rose up and stretched their limbs, and began to criticise Sir Weedel Claspett's speech; and the county magnates in the grand jury benches led off the great ladies to lunch; and 'my lud' moved away, smiling courteously to the high sheriff, who was saying something in 'my lud's' ear about "a bottle of excellent Madeira;" and the twelve gentlemen of the jury toddled off, under guard, for fresh air and luncheon, or maybe dinner; and the general crowd, who dared not leave the court, for fear they shouldn't be able to get in again, began to eat sandwiches, and talk out loud, and stare at the prisoner,—who stood motionless as a statue, with his stern, rigid face turned to the vacant benches of the jury-box.

* * * *

Punctually as the court clock pointed to one, 'my lud,' and the high sheriff, and the county magnates, and the great ladies, and Sir Weedel Claspett, and his

twelve particular friends, and his learned brother. Mr. Serjeant Antrobus, and his young but learned friend, Mr. Spillbridge, returned to court. There was no noise, but the crier bawled out, "Silence, silence!"—and, as he did so, everyone in the crowded court began to hustle, and hum, and stamp. On which the cries of "Silence" were reiterated furiously by the crier,—who looked about angrily in search for the particular person whom he believed to be making all the noise.

At length the silence so loudly clamoured for was obtained; and then the first witness was called.

Frederick Manthorp Forrester, Solicitor,—&c.,—of King's Heath:—The witness (after stating that he was a member of the legal profession, and had for many years been in the habit of advancing cash, in great or small sums, to clients who had urgent need of ready money) stated what he knew of the deceased Alexander Barber. "He didn't know much good about him. He might say he didn't know any good about him. He believed him to be a great scoundrel. He maintained dealings with him, knowing him to be a great scoundrel, because those dealings had in the main answered his (witness's) purpose. It was no part of a lawyer to reject a profitable client because his moral character would not bear investigation. Had, during the last years of Alexander Barber's life, advanced him considerable sums. It was needless to say at what rates of interest and on what security such sums had in all instances been advanced. He should not have lent the deceased so much money, had he (witness) not known that a close intimacy subsisted between deceased and the prisoner, so much so that the deceased could command to a great extent the prisoner's pecuniary resources. Had no knowledge what was the source of Alec Barber's influ-

ence over the prisoner, but had suspicions. Perhaps he suspected that a turf secret had put the prisoner under the thumb of the King's Heath man; on the other hand, perhaps he didn't. Had lent Alec Barber on one occasion a very long sum; but before he did so, obtained custody of a certain bond which prisoner had given deceased. The bond was rendered void by the negotiation; but witness did not expect the prisoner would ever be informed of the negotiation. It was not witness's part to inform the prisoner. Had the bond ever come due, Alec Barber would have settled with the prisoner; and witness would have settled with Alec Barber. In business matters it was sometimes necessary to stretch a point. What the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve for. Had the post-obit bond still in his possession. Could produce it. Would produce it. His Lordship might inspect it. The jury were at liberty to look at it. It could be read aloud. There was no doubt as to the genuineness of the prisoner's signature. Knew prisoner's hand-writing well. Could swear that the signature was in prisoner's hand-writing."

The next witnesses called were the attesting witnesses of the bond, who merely proved that the prisoner had executed the bond.

Mr. Stephen Dowse was then called: "Mr. Stephen Dowse was a bank-agent at Merton-Piggott. He was a partner in the banking-house of Crabtree, Scuttle, and Co. Indeed he was the Co. in that banking-house. The witness was well known throughout the 'light lands,' and was highly respected. He was a warm man. The Dowses had from time immemorial been a warm family. Witness thought it possible that the Dowses came over from Normandy at the conquest,

but he didn't know. Mr. Dowse had known the prisoner from boyhood, indeed from infancy. Had always predicted evil of him. Those predictions had been verified. Had not published his predictions for many years, to the world at large. Had made them in confidence to his wife, Mrs. Dowse, who was not in court. Witness was accustomed to think more than he said. He was a close and sure man. If he hadn't been close and sure, he would never have risen to be the man he then was. Witness would tell the jury all that he knew of the prisoner's pecuniary embarrassments, and of his intercourse with Alexander Barber, up to the time of the said Alexander Barber's death."

Whereupon, Mr. Stephen Dowse stated when his attention had first been called to the existence of a closer intercourse between the prisoner and deceased than is usually maintained between gentlemen of estate and horse-racing jockey adventurers. He stated all he knew of that intercourse. He placed before the jury the scene which he had witnessed in the Gedgrave 'Horseshoes,' when the deceased was found by witness lying on the floor, and bleeding from blows which had been inflicted upon him by the prisoner. Mr. Dowse stated that not many weeks elapsed ere he received information that the prisoner (after the scene of violence just described) had given Alec Barber a post-obit bond. Mr. Dowse was not astonished on receiving such information. He was a close and sure man; and it was his rule to be astonished at nothing.

After touching on certain comparatively unimportant matters, which it is unnecessary to lay before the reader, Mr. Dowse brought his narrative down to the morning of the Newton races, when he met the prisoner and deceased at the Fulbourne crossings. "It was clear to

Mr. Dowse that they had been having an altercation. Mr. Dowse saw the prisoner raise his hand menacingly to the deceased, whereupon deceased drove away rapidly. When Mr. Dowse accosted prisoner immediately after Alec Barber's departure, prisoner was in a state of great excitement, and addressed witness without due courtesy. Witness said nothing at the time to his companion, Mr. Winyard, but as he drove on he meditated on the probability of the prisoner,—a desperate and fallen man,—sooner or later turning upon the villain (who was torturing him beyond endurance) and murdering him. Mr. Dowse said nothing to Mr. Winyard, because it was his rule to be 'close.' ”

Passing on to events of the night, Mr. Dowse gave all those particulars of the fray and subsequent collision with which the reader is already familiar.

By a Juror (John Braddock).—“ Mr. Dowse believed that only one explosion was heard. If two pistols were fired, they must have been fired simultaneously. The noise of the explosion, whether it was made by one pistol or two, was repeated with distinctness, and several times by an echo. Mr. Dowse was strongly of opinion that but one pistol was fired. It was dark under the trees; but still there was light enough for witness to discern the prisoner's features. Even if the meeting at Fulbourne crossings on the morning had not occurred, and if the name of 'Turrett' had not been uttered in a loud voice, just before the firing of the pistol, Mr. Dowse would have held the same opinion as to the identity of the prisoner and the horseman. Mr. Dowse had no doubt whatever as to the identity.”

Mr. Winyard corroborated Mr. Dowse's evidence in every particular, as to the events of the night. It was dark under the trees; but he could see the horseman's

features, and knew him directly to be Mr. Turrett.

Julius King, M.D., described the wound caused by the pistol shot, and said that death must have been instantaneous. Alec Barber must have been dead before his gig was upset, and he was thrown into the road.

John Hodge, labourer, testified that he picked up in the road a certain pistol (then placed before him), and took it forthwith to the coroner.

Reuben Thomas, gunsmith, of King's Heath, identified the pistol as one he had sold the prisoner four years before.

The ostler of the Newton hotel certified the time at which the prisoner left Newton on the night after the races.

The landlord of the Stanmore 'Griffin' bore testimony to the time when the prisoner had ridden up to his house, and asked for a bed.

The landlord's evidence closed the case for the prosecution.

The prisoner, who throughout the investigation had remained almost in one attitude, and had declined to put a question to any one of the witnesses, was now asked for his defence. There was still an hour to the time at which it was usual for the court to rise, and he could forthwith commence his statement to the jury.

There was a dead silence throughout the densely-crowded court; silence with the gentlemen of the bar, who turned their faces towards the accused man; silence on the bench; silence with the county magnates; silence with the great ladies, whose hearts were beating fast; silence in the throng. Had a pin dropped or a paper fallen, the noise of it would have been audible in that eager, excited, breathless assembly.

"My Lord," said the prisoner, bowing slightly to

the bench, "an hour is far more than I shall require to make the brief statement which I would address—to all present, and to all beyond these walls, who take an interest in my wretched fate,—not less than to the gentlemen of the jury."

His voice was deep, impressive, unwavering. I was the voice of a brave, honest gentleman, speaking solemnly, at a most awful moment;—not of a murderer craving acquittal.

"Gentlemen of the Jury," continued Edgar Turrett turning to Sir Weedel Claspett's twelve friends, "to the overwhelming testimony which points me as out the murderer of Alexander Barber, I have literally nothing to oppose but my own personal and unsupported declaration that I am as innocent as a new-born babe of the crime laid to my charge; and to that declaration I of course expect you to attach only little weight—indeed no weight whatever. The facts have been laid before you without interruption from me. Had I chosen to do so, I could on several occasions have stopped the chief witness against me—Mr. Dowse—when he wandered from the subject immediately under consideration, and stated matters which, while they had no connexion whatever with this murder, must have increased the ill opinion you have necessarily formed of me;—but I preferred that you and the public should know all that can be said against me.

"The facts which have been laid before you—facts to which I can offer no denial, and statements which it is impossible for me to disprove—are more than enough to justify you in returning a verdict of guilty. As for motive,—Heaven knows that, had I been capable of murder, I had a sufficient motive to impel me to the deed. The dead man was to me no ordinary enemy

Had I murdered him on the night when he fell, my motive to the crime would not have been the poor consideration of a pecuniary loss ; but a consideration arising from events which made me little else than his slave. What those events were, love and honour forbid me to inform you. They are parts of an awful secret,—which *duty*, not selfish care, does not permit me to reveal. This only I tell you, don't trouble yourselves with evidence of motive. Take my word for it—I had motive enough.

“As to other facts,—I would rather diminish than increase any baseless doubt that may exist in your minds. I admit that I parted with the dead man, on the morning of the Newton races, with a threat upon my lips. I admit that I left Newton at the time stated, with the intention of riding to the Stanmore ‘Griffin,’ where I actually slept ; and I admit that I rode into the parish of Fulbourne, turning from the high road on to the heath ; but on the night of the murder I did not go within two miles of Fulbourne Banks. I may also tell you that before I quitted the high road, Alec Barber passed me in his gig, driving furiously, yelling loudly, and evidently mad with drink. Soon after he passed me he met his death,—*but not from me!* On the heath I lost my way, and did not reach the Stanmore ‘Griffin’ till the time mentioned by the landlord. As far as the evidence of time goes, you will therefore be perfectly justified in concluding me to be the murderer ; for, from the time when I turned on to the heath till I rode up to the ‘Griffin,’ I did not encounter a human creature who could help me to prove that I was not at Fulbourne Banks at the moment of the murder.

“Let us pass to the particulars laid before you, with regard to the fray. Mr. Dowse says he heard the

words 'Squire Turrett' uttered in a loud voice, just before the report of a pistol reached his ears. I cannot,—*you* cannot suppose Mr. Dowse to be mistaken with regard to this fact. The explanation which I accept for myself is, that Alec Barber finding himself attacked by a horseman, and remembering that he had passed and accosted me shortly before, and knowing what motive I had for attacking him, in the confusion of intoxication, and the alarm of imminent peril, mistook another man for me, and addressed him by my name. But, of course, I cannot hope that you will accept this explanation.

"The shot is fired. Mr. Dowse thinks there was only one shot; but he is not quite certain on this point. The distance between him and the explosion, and the reverberations along the banks, account for this uncertainty. Immediately after this shot, a horseman galloped past Mr. Dowse and his companion. Mr. Dowse was so impressed that I was the rider, he even called out to him by my name. Mr. Winyard also (who doubtless knows me well by sight) identifies the horseman as myself. It is true, it was very dark under the trees; but the horseman must have passed close to them. Under the circumstances, a stronger case of identification could not well be. Doubtless the cry of 'Squire Turrett' prepared them to find me on the ground, and the darkness, favouring the belief that I was near at hand, completed their error.—For gentlemen, on my word of honour, they were mistaken.—*I was not that horseman.*

"Lastly, a pistol with my name engraven on it, is picked up not far from the spot where Alexander Barber was killed. That pistol is my property. It was one I lent to Barber two or three years since, when he

was starting unarmed, on a long night journey out of the 'corn country'. He never returned the weapon to me, and he doubtless had it in his possession when he fell at Fulbourne Banks. It must have fallen from his hand, and dropped to the ground, as he sunk back dead. Possibly there were two pistols fired, and his weapon was one of them. Possibly his weapon caused a solitary explosion, and deprived of life the man who was too drunk to know how to handle it. Possibly, though he took it into his hand, it was unloaded. But this is certain;—that pistol had not been in my hand for years.

"Gentlemen,—I have made these few remarks, not with any hope that they will induce you to return a verdict of acquittal. I have no desire for longer life. I have scarce left in me a desire to escape an unspeakably ignominious death. No verdict of yours can increase or diminish my degradation. I am so wrapt in darkest shame, that it matters not if one fold more be added to the black robe that covers me,—or if one thin fold be taken from it. I am looking beyond your tribunal to another,—to that last high tribunal which ere now has reversed unjust sentences passed upon their brothers by weak, blind, erring mortals. You will pay thin heed to the words which I have spoken;—but they will perhaps cheer those gentle hearts—who once loved me,—and still love me.

"My Lord,—I have done."

Whereupon his lordship delivered his summing-up, saying—without flippancy,—on the contrary, with signs of genuine emotion—that "the prisoner, in his brief and impressive remarks, had in reality summed up the evidence against himself."

His lordship's address to the jury was, therefore,

short; and when it was ended, Sir Weedel Claspett's twelve friends put their heads together, whispering and buzzing.

To which bobbing, humming, busy pile of skulls, all eyes were turned.

Of course, the verdict must be one of 'Guilty.'

What could the pile of skulls be waiting for?

One,—two,—three,—four,—five minutes! And still the skulls went on, bobbing, and humming, and huddling into closer contact. What could the debate be about? Where was the uncertainty? Surely bald pate, and curly pate, and bewigged pate, and all the pates would not retire to deliberate!

At length the jurymen turn towards the bench.

My 'lud' looks inquiringly, and the county grandees look inquiringly, as also do the great ladies on the benches.

"My Lord" says one of the jurymen "we wish to retire for a few minutes to deliberate."

"Oh, certainly—you can deliberate," returns 'my lud' in a sarcastic voice, "—and may you deliberate to the best of those abilities with which—it has pleased God to bless you!"

Whereupon Sir Weedel Claspett's twelve friends shuffle and stumble through the jurors' door, on their way to deliberate; and 'the house' is left to wonder and grumble,—to grumble at jurymen being such fools as to want to deliberate when there is no need of deliberation; and to wonder if 'my lord' will have occasion to put on the black cap before dinner.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SCENE NEVER BEFORE DESCRIBED BY HISTORIAN.

MR. EPHRAIM HEDGEStAKE, architect (the note-taking juryman), had gained an influence over his brother jurors by the assiduity with which he shook his head and took notes—and in consequence of the influence so gained he was invited to preside over their deliberations.

Whereupon Mr. Ephraim HedgeStake took the chair at the head of a long table, by which stood eleven other chairs, for the accommodation of the other members of the council. There were pens, ink, and paper on the table; but there was no carpet on the floor, no signs that the jury room was intended for aught in the way of enjoyment. Indeed the apartment had a cheerless, prison-like air. The windows were trellised with iron bars, securely set in stone frames, so that juries might be kept in safe and sound, until they had settled their little differences. The walls were bare alike of pictures, paper, paint; besides the table and chairs, fire-irons, a candle-box, and a box for tinder, flint, steel, and

matches, there was not a single article of furniture in the place; and when the little parliament found seats at the long table, each member knew that the door was barred on the outside, that an officer was watching on the staircase, that he himself and his eleven brethren were close prisoners, and would remain so until they could agree on a verdict.

Scant mercy was shown to juries in the 'light lands' in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-four. Starvation or a verdict was the alternative. Unanimity or hunger, my enlightened gentlemen of the jury! Rather an ignominious position this for Sir Weedel Claspett's particular friends!—for the practical business men who had come forward on public grounds to assist the attorney-general in unravelling some knotty points of evidence! Mr. Frederick Gusterby took off his spectacles, and wiped them, wishing himself downstairs.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Ephraim Hedgestake, tapping the table with his knuckles, "I sincerely trust that our deliberations will not be unnecessarily protracted,"—('hear, hear,' from ten jurors, who turned their eyes angrily towards Mr. John Braddock.)

"Hear, hear," murmured John Braddock, bookseller, Sedgehassock,—when there was silence.

"The position of jurymen," continued Mr. Hedgestake, "is a proud position. Without trial by jury, where would be our liberties?"

"It's precious little liberty *we* are likely to get this night out of trial by jury!" interposed Mr. Peter Horseman, the discontented jurymen, who disapproved of compulsory and unpaid services of any kind in a free country.

Cries of 'Chair, chair,' and 'Order, order.'

“Order be blowed !” exclaimed the infuriated Mr. Horseman. “I wont keep order ! Turn me out if you like ! I wish you could turn me out ! What’s despotism, if this is freedom ?”

Mr. Hedgestake made another note, and then rising to his legs, waved his hands for silence, which having been obtained, he again began to speak. “When I was somewhat abruptly broken in upon by my very excellent friend, Mr. Horseman, I was about to remark that however much a juryman may be sustained by sense of benefiting society at a sacrifice of private interest, he still stands in need of dinner,—supper,—comforts. Now, gentlemen, it is several hours since we have taken anything into our stomachs. We were let out at half-past twelve for a short time; but owing to imperfect arrangements, to which I needn’t further allude, I think I am not wrong in saying that not one of us got a proper liberal meal,—and not one of us at this present moment is anything better than half-famished. (‘Hear, hear.’ Well, gentlemen, that being the case, the sooner we go to business the better,—and the sooner we get home to muffins and cold meat the better,—and the sooner we do our duty to the public the better. These are my sentiments. And so, gentlemen, we’ll go to a show of hands at once,—and see who’s on one side,—and who on the other. First, gentlemen, I put ‘guilty’ before your notice, prefacing my so doing by a candid avowal—that I and Sir Weedel Claspett pull together in this matter.—Now, gentlemen, those who are in favour of ‘guilty’ will be so good as to join me in holding up hands. Now, gentlemen, one hand each !”

In an instant eleven hands were pointed to the ceiling; and two-and-twenty eyes were turned upon John Braddock, who rose and addressed the

chair in his small, placid, and self-dependent voice.

"Sir,—and Gentlemen,—I regret to see that I am the only dissentient. I regret it for your sakes, inasmuch as it may cause you some inconvenience. I regret it for my own sake, inasmuch as it may rouse against me a little temporary irritation. But I am hopeful that calm discussion will bring you all round to my way of thinking."

"Confound your impudence, sir," exclaimed Mr. Atterbury, the choleric wine-merchant, springing to the full height of his stout, sturdy figure, "who are you, sir, I should like to know, that you should think that Charles Atterbury will be brought to your way of thinking?—*your way of thinking,—your way, indeed!*—Confound your impudence; who are you, sir?"

"I am an honest man, Mr. Atterbury," returned John Braddock, mildly, "and I have taken an oath to give a true verdict according to the evidence. I have a great respect for you, sir,—and I am aware that your position in this city is greatly superior to mine. But, sir, I must forget that now,—and think of my oath."

"Ah!" ejaculated the morbidly conscientious Mr. Frogmore, "you kissed the book!—So you did, sir.—An oath is a fearful thing."

"Think of your oath!"—exclaimed Mr. Atterbury, shaking his fist over the table at John Braddock's face, and turning purple with rage. "Think of eleven gentlemen who want their suppers! That's much more to the purpose. You're a dissentient, sir, mark my words,—you're a *dissentient*! And mark this, if we both leave this room alive, your name in this city shall be Mr. One-to-eleven, or my name isn't Charles Atterbury. And there's one for your nob, Mr. One-to-eleven. Do you hear me, sir? You're a dissentient!"

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Sinking back in his chair exhausted with passion, Mr. Atterbury was succeeded by the conscientious Mr. Frogmore, who said, "Mr. Hedgestake, it's a rule that we ought to give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt. If we say 'guilty,' it follows that we believe the guilt is proved. If we say 'not guilty,' it doesn't necessarily follow that we see innocence proved, but it may mean that we don't quite see our way to the guilt. For myself, I can't see room for doubt. But if there be room for the doubt, I should, as a conscientious jurymen, like to have it pointed out to me. I move, sir, that Mr. Braddock make a statement of his views."

Whereupon Mr. Amos Clarke, agriculturist of an 'old school,' cleared his throat, and said, "Mr. Chairman, I am wholly against hearing Mr. Braddock's views. I am for hanging. My mind is easy, and I don't want to have it worried. Sir Weedel Claspett's mind is made up, and I should think Mr. Braddock might be content to follow an example set him by the attorney-general.—Leastways, my mind is easy,—and I don't want to have it worried."

"Hear, hear!" applauded Mr. Atterbury. "What do *eleven* gentlemen want with *one* man's views? Who ever heard of such a thing as one man dictating to eleven?—Numbers carry it all the world through!"

"Not in a jury-room," put in Mr. Horseman. "Not in a jury-room. The victory in a jury-room sometimes goes with the strongest stomach, and the weakest head!"

"It shan't go so here, though," exclaimed Mr. Atterbury. "If I'm carried out of this room on a

plank, I wont give in. I am Charles Atterbury."

"Gentlemen," resumed Mr. Frogmore, "I have made a motion that Mr. Braddock state his views. Will nobody second that motion?"

Passing his right hand over the crisp curls of his flaxen hair, Mr. Albert Duggan rose and said, "Sir, I beg leave to second Mr. Frogmore's motion." As a member of Sedgessock town-council, who believed himself endowed with great capability for conducting public affairs, Mr. Albert Duggan was always ready to second a proposition when he did not happen to be its mover.

"Then, gentlemen," observed Mr. Hedgestake, having taken another note, "I put the motion. Those who wish to hear Mr. Braddock state his views will be good enough to hold up their hands. Very good; eight hands held up. Gentlemen, the motion is carried."

"Carried!" roared Mr. Atterbury, "carried!—pack of rubbish, gentlemen! What's carried? Eleven men going to listen to views they disapprove. What'll presumption do next? I never heard the like."

Loud cries of 'order, order.'

Mr. Hedgestake.—"Mr. Braddock, you have the ear of the jury."

Whereupon John Braddock, taking firm hold of the ear of the jury, spoke to it thus,—mildly, soothingly, persuasively:—

"Gentlemen, I am not surprised at finding myself alone, as Mr. Atterbury says, one against eleven; and I can assure you I would not presume to place my opinion against yours, if I didn't feel that I had good reasons for doing so. Years back, gentlemen, many years back, I was concerned with a jury which, on

quite as strong evidence as has been put before us to-day, brought in a verdict that sentenced a human creature to die,—and yet the verdict was erroneous. The man was innocent. That experience was a warning to me; and ever since that event I have been very scrupulous in sifting evidence before I act upon it.

“The evidence against the prisoner is very strong,—so strong that he feels there is no hope left for him (as he told us), so strong that, had it not been for one circumstance, I should have been with you, and ere this we should have returned a verdict of guilty.

“As briefly as I can, gentlemen, I’ll tell you what that circumstance is.

“On the night of the Fulbourne murder, I was out on my country rounds, riding my black horse, which good beast most of you gentlemen know by sight. Well, half an hour before Alexander Barber was shot dead I rode my horse up Fulbourne Banks, on my way to Ashton, where I slept at the ‘William and Mary.’ Not a single soul did I meet on that lonely road between Fulbourne and Ashton. Now suppose I had been half an hour later, just one short half an hour later—suppose I had come to the foot of the Banks just as the shot was fired—and suppose Alec Barber in his drunkenness had mistaken me for Mr. Turrett, whom he had left two miles and more behind him,—suppose that he in his intoxication (imagining that I, peaceful traveller that I was, had come upon him with a hostile purpose) had pulled out a loaded pistol to defend himself, howling out to me, at the same time, by the name of Turrett,—suppose also that he raised his pistol, drunk as he was, and shot himself by accident. Just suppose this: and then tell me if

under such circumstances it is repugnant to reason to believe that I might, panic-struck, have ridden away at the gallop, thinking it best to get clear of a spot where, if I was found, suspicion of murder might have fallen upon me. I am far from a physically courageous man, or a morally courageous man either, gentlemen. If I had ridden to the foot of Fulbourne Banks only half an hour later, and witnessed such a scene, I think I should most probably have so ridden away in alarm. In that case I should have met Mr. Dowse. Do you think I should have stopped to correct him when he, taking up the cry from the dead man's lips, called me Mr. Turrett. Why, gentlemen, a timid man like myself would have ridden straight on, glad of Mr. Dowse's mistake, and afterwards comforting himself with the thought that Mr. Turrett (whoever he might be) could take care of himself, by proving that he was elsewhere at the time of the accident.

"Put it in another way, gentlemen. Suppose Mr. Dowse had recognized me, would not then much of the suspicion which now rests on the prisoner have rested on me?

"The two great points which make against the prisoner are the evidence of recognition by Mr. Dowse and his clerk, and the finding of the pistol. Now, first, gentlemen, for the recognition. As I have just told you, I rode up the Fulbourne Banks, under the trees, just half an hour before Mr. Dowse drove down them; and I give you my word, gentlemen, that though it was a starlight night, it was pitch-dark under the trees; so dark I could not see my horse's ears,—ay, couldn't see my own fingers. I made an observation of the darkness, when I was at the very point where Mr. Dowse says the

horseman passed him ; and I am sure it was utterly impossible for him to recognize any one at that point, and time. It was utterly impossible for him to do so. Of course Mr. Dowse is a highly respectable man, and believes what he said ; but I know to my certain knowledge that he could not have recognised the horseman who rode past him at full gallop. It was imagination, not ocular perception, that led him to call out 'In God's name, what are you after, Mr. Turrett?' In the morning, he had seen Mr. Turrett and Alec Barber parting in anger ; and knowing what good reason the former had to hate the latter, he drove on his way, meditating the probability that the gentleman would sooner or later murder the black-leg ; his mind was thus predisposed to accept all facts indicating that such a collision might occur, or had occurred. At night as he is driving from Ashton, he hears a loud cry of 'Squire Turrett,' and forthwith he thinks of the man who bears that title ; in less than half a minute a pistol is fired, and a man gallops past him ; naturally he believes him to be the Mr. Turrett whom he saw mounted in the morning ; in another flash of time he was standing over the dead body of Alec Barber, who, he had made up his mind, would very likely fall by Mr. Turrett's hand. Surely, gentlemen, here are circumstances enough to make us suspect the soundness and credibility of Mr. Dowse's evidence. I don't merely suspect it. I know it ought not be relied upon. He tells me he discerned by his own eyes that the horseman was Mr. Turrett ; whereas I know that, at that pitch-dark spot, it was beyond the power of human eyes to have discerned so much. Consequently it is impossible for me to give any weight on this point to the ocular testimony of Mr. Dowse and his clerk.

"I dismiss it altogether.

“What then remains? As to how Mr. Turrett’s name happened to be yelled out by the drunken fellow, before he died, a reasonable explanation has already been put before you. Mad with drink, Alec Barber may have mistaken the man by whom he was accosted. Or possibly the murderer himself (if there was a murderer, and if Barber did not die by his own drunken hand), when he got into words with his victim, assumed the name of the prisoner, and pretended to be Squire Turrett.

“You’ll say, how came the prisoner’s pistol on the ground? Surely, gentlemen, his statement is credible. Long since, he lent the pistol to the dead man. What is there incredible in that? We know he gave the man much more than a pistol’s value.

“You’ll say the prisoner has not a witness to prove that he was on Fulbourne *Heath*, or elsewhere away from Fulbourne *Banks*, at the time of the murder. Well! if to save my life it were necessary for me to prove that I was at Fulbourne *Banks*, or elsewhere away from Fulbourne *Heath*, at the time when I tell you that I actually was at Fulbourne *Banks*, I couldn’t find a witness to help me to do so.—You see, gentlemen, having been myself on the road on the night of the murder, I feel all these points so much more strongly than you can be expected to feel them.

“The prisoner told us not to trouble ourselves about the question of motive, and said that, were he capable of murder, he had motive enough for depriving the scoundrel Barber of his life. And don’t you think that there are scores of men in the ‘light lands’ who also had good reason to wish Alec Barber dead? Don’t you suppose that scores of men in the ‘light lands,’ when they heard that that wretch had been sent to his doom, said, ‘I am glad of it, for he wronged me

or mine; there's one utter rascal less in the world.' Nobody who knows me will accuse me of being a bloodthirsty man, but when I heard of Alec Barber's death, I said, 'I am glad of it. The brute who for years has maltreated his wife, my dear old friend Shakespeare Wylie's niece, is dead,—and now the poor woman may again be happy.'

"What I say, gentlemen, is this: it is perfectly possible for the murder to have been committed by some other man than the prisoner. It is just possible that no murder at all was committed.

"Now, gentlemen, I have put my difficulties before you. I am a conscientious man, anxious to do my duty to all men; and until those difficulties or doubts are removed, I must decline to side with you. At present I am in favour of a verdict of 'Not Guilty.'"

"I'll die sooner than give in!" exclaimed Mr. Charles Atterbury, as John Braddock sat down, having made an evident impression on some of his hearers.

"I'll take a nap," said Mr. Amos Clarke, settling himself for slumber in a very uncomfortable chair.

"And what do you think of this, Mr. Clitheroe?" confidentially inquired the intelligent Mr. Easter. "Mr. Braddock is a man of sagacity and character. Few men of his means and station stand for more in the city. What do you think of it, Mr. Clitheroe?"

"Think of it?" returned Mr. Clitheroe, looking more than ever like a large red wafer, pressed by a huge thumb, "think of it. What could I think of it? The man has talked, and talked, and talked, till I'm

well nigh dazed. Why couldn't he leave it as Sir Weedel Claspett left it? That was comfortable enough. But now he has tumbled everything upside down, so that I don't know whether I am on my head or my heels. There *may* have been a murder, and there *mayn't* have been a murder. I am well nigh dazed."

The discussion became more animated.

Speakers were so loud, that Mr. Amos Clarke couldn't sleep. Sometimes there were a dozen orators pouring arguments into the ear of the jury at the same time; very rarely but one man was on his legs. Mr. Charles Atterbury fumed. Mr. Nathaniel Jowler ate his last peppermint, and rubbed his hands. Mr. John Brad-dock, complacent, conciliating, mild, watchful, answered every question that was put to him, and replied to none of the many insults that were showered upon him. Mr. Peter Horseman ever and again broke in on discussion by demanding to be informed if England was a free country, and whether in any community, professing to call itself civilized, a respectable tradesman ought to have his time taken up without adequate remuneration.

Six o'clock,—seven o'clock,—eight o'clock,—half-past eight o'clock, and still No. 1 held out against No. 11.

The conscientious Mr. Frogmore took no part in the discussion, but sitting a pace or two away from the table, alternately listened to the speakers, or had hard fights with his doubts.

At nine o'clock Mr. Frogmore rose and broke silence.

"Mr. Hedgestake,—Mr. Chairman," he said, slowly, "after careful deliberation, I must say I

think Mr. Braddock's difficulties are reasonable, and I go over to his side."

Great sensation.

"I'll pay you out for this," exclaimed the infuriated Mr. Charles Atterbury, shaking his fist again at John Braddock, who took no notice whatever of the menace. "My brother is mayor next year,—and precious little of the corporation printing you shall have."

"For shame, for shame, Mr. Atterbury," put in the conscientious Mr. Frogmore. "But Mr. Braddock has strong friends, and can despise your threats.—Thank heaven! Mr. Charles Atterbury isn't everybody in Sedgehassock!"

"He's more than you, though," cried Mr. Charles Atterbury, goaded to frenzy by the defection. "You mind your shop, sir; you stick to your plums. Stick to plums, sir. I beg you to remember, sir, I am in the wine trade."

In an instant Mr. Matthew Allen and Mr. Peter Horseman were on their feet, crying out—

"Mr. Charles Atterbury, do you mean to insult us?"

"Indeed, no, gentlemen," returned Mr. Atterbury, trembling with agitation, and fearing that his rash speech would cause a further defection from the majority.

Raising his voice, the chairman cried—

"Order! order! gentlemen. What is the matter?"

"Mr. Atterbury," answered Mr. Allen, "is making unbecoming reflections on the grocery trade, sir. He is absurdly magnifying the dignity of the wine trade, and is alluding to plums in a tone of voice in which it isn't customary to allude to plums in any assembly of gentlemen."

"Indeed, gentlemen," urged Mr. Atterbury, "you're mistaken. I meant no disrespect to the grocery trade. In the heat of discussion, I employed an intemperate expression, but believe me, I have a high regard for grocers as a body, and believe them to be the bulwarks of our national greatness. As to my exalting the wine business, nothing was further from my thoughts. The grape and the currant are kindred spirits,—gentlemen. And I need scarcely remind my fellow-citizens that my grandmother died in a grocery business."

"Then, sir," inquired Mr. Hedgestake, "I may understand that you retract your words?"

"Quite so—quite so—I retract them," replied Mr. Atterbury with an effort.

"Then," said the atrabilious Mr. Horseman, "since you've retracted your words out of respect for my feelings, I'll say 'Good-bye' to you. I can't pull with a man who doesn't stick to his words, whatever they may be. So, gentlemen, I am for 'plums' and 'not guilty.'"

"To which I say 'ditter,'" valiantly exclaimed Mr. Matthew Allen. "I always speak well of the bridge that carries me safe over, and stand to my colours. I am a 'not guilty' man.—Now all the grocers are of one mind."

Here was a defection. It was no longer one to eleven; but four to eight.

Whereupon Mr. Albert Duggan, conspicuous by blue satin stock and white waistcoat, rose, under a sense of public duty, and declared that he too was a 'not guilty' man. "The same considerations which have changed Mr. Frogmore have changed me."

"Ah," muttered Mr. Atterbury, dropping down from purple rage to white rage, "he's Frogmore's syco-

phant. They live in the same parish, and he expects Frogmore to help him to the churchwardenship." This was muttered to Mr. Amos Clarke.

Mr. Albert Duggan's secession was followed by murmurs of excitement.

It was five to seven. Another secession from the majority; and the two parties would be alike in number.

"You'll stand by me till the last?" inquired Mr. Atterbury of his ally, Mr. Amos Clarke.

"I'll sit by you," was the answer.

"Ay, ay—but you'll be with me?"

"Till I die," replied the farmer, doggedly.

Then, turning to Mr. Clitheroe, Mr. Atterbury whispered "You'll hold out?"

"I suppose so—I suppose so," was the not reassuring answer.

Silence after agitation.

"Gentlemen, we'd better light candles," observed Mr. Hedgestake, breaking silence. "I can't see to take notes any longer. I see there's the candle-box, and candle-sticks, and tinder-box on the mantel-piece. Mr. Duggan, would you object to light them? You should know all about brimstone."

Whereupon Mr. Duggan brought the candles and sticks and tinder-box to the table. Years upon years had still to pass before that beautiful invention of modern science, the lucifer match, was to diminish toil and contribute to the comfort of mankind. With flint and steel Mr. Duggan had first to strike a spark to the tinder; then he had gently, delicately, coaxingly, to blow up the feeble speck of fire to a patch; and then he had to apply a long, broad, brimstone-tipped slip of wood to the glowing spot.

"It's a damp match," growled the sour Mr. Horseman.

But greatly to Mr. Horseman's disappointment, the match was not damp. On the contrary, it blazed up merrily, and in a minute two candles were alight on the jury-table.

"Mr. Chairman," continued the discontented jurymen, rising to his legs, "I move that one of those candles be put out. There are but two more candles in the box;—so counting those just lighted we have only four. Now, sir, I am not so much thinking of light as the means of life. If we can't soon agree to a verdict, we shall be shut up for the night. Thank heaven it's warm weather!—And unless I am mistaken, we're poorly off for provisions; for I take it for certain that if any gentleman had any provision in his pocket, he'd have, at least, had a taste of it himself, and given us a smell of it before now. The fact is,—not at all expecting there'd be any trouble about this small matter, I never thought of taking in stock. I am very hungry indeed. Others besides myself must be very hungry also; and before the sun rises upon us, the weakest of us will be suffering acutely—possibly suffering the last pangs of inanition. So, gentlemen, let's be saving with our candles. Any one of us may be glad to eat a bit of candle afore the morning; and heaven knows if, afore we're liberated, we mayn't take to eating each other. I have read of locked-up juries taking to cannibalism. Anyhow, let's take care of our candles."

At which dolorous speech all the jurors (with the exception of the speaker and Mr. Atterbury, and the nervous Mr. Nathaniel Jowler) laughed heartily.

When laughter had ceased, Mr. Jowler observed in quavering tones, "I am afraid Mr. Horseman has spoken the truth, and that we are literally without any provision whatever. Heaven knows what will become of us. I, gentlemen, am a man with a nervous organization, and require my stimulants regular. Surely, Mr. Hedgestake, if under all the circumstances we draw up a statement that we are not likely to come to a decision, and having summoned the officer who's outside to send it to the judge, his lordship would be induced to liberate us—or, at least, to send us supper.—It's sheer barbarity to keep twelve Christian jurymen locked up all night without sustenance. Gentlemen, our innards are preying on theirselves—that's what our innards are doing. Will any gentleman second my proposal?"

No gentleman volunteered to second Mr. Jowler's proposal. On the contrary, every gentleman covered it with derision. There was no precedent for such a proceeding. The notion was preposterous. His lordship would only laugh at such a proceeding. They were jurymen; and 'starvation or a verdict' was jury law. It was not to be even dreamt of that the King's judge would free them from the pinch of 'the system,' simply because they were pinched. His lordship would only answer that 'if the jury wanted their suppers and beds, they'd better agree to a finding.'

Thus was Mr. Jowler's proposal received.

And indeed past experience justified its contemptuous reception. In 1824, the jurymen of the 'light lands' knew naught of the judicial courtesy which in these more lenient and effeminate times accords physical comforts to jurymen at their deliberations, and dismisses juries when they are unable to agree.

Mr. Jowler having been laughed down, Mr Horseman

reminded the council of his motion about the candles, and asked if no one would second it. Whereat there was renewed laughter; and the discontented member expressed himself disgusted with the flippancy of men who could give way to mirth when they were debating the grave question whether they should send a human creature to eternity.

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Amos Clarke, creating another diversion, "we ain't come to eating candles yet. I have got a little sample of wheat here in my pocket, which I shall be happy to go partner with you all in,—share and share alike. It's a very pretty sample,—as nice a sample as ever was dressed.—I wish I had a bushel of it about me."

Whereupon the farmer went about the room, distributing about forty kernels of the 'pretty sample' to each of his brother jurors; and each juror held out his right paw for the modest ration, and accepted it with thanks.

Nay, there was an exception.

In his journey round the table, distributing corn to the hungry, Mr. Amos Clarke came to John Braddock last, and was about to give him a fair pugillus of kernels, when Mr. Charles Atterbury, springing once more into purple rage, exclaimed—"No, sir, no, sir, none for the dissentient;—none for the dissentient! Mr. One-to-Eleven caused all the mischief. Punish him. Don't give him a single corn. Punish him!"

For ten seconds the honest farmer paused,—for ten seconds and not more, when he said, "Pooh, the corn is my own, and I may do what I like with it. Gentlemen, I am a farmer of the 'old school,'—and my 'mottor' is 'live and let live: do as you'd be done by; pay your rent: and pray the Lord to send you high

prices.' That's my 'motter,' and though he was the first dissentient, and caused all the mischief, Mr. Braddock shall take his corns with us :—and I hope he'll digest 'em well. He looks well nigh famished as it is. A thinner and more skeletonian sort o' man I haven't clapt eyes on for a month !”

At which generous decision there was a hum of approval amongst John Braddock's fellow-dissentients ; and even certain members of the majority were inclined to applaud.

Greatly surprised were they when John Braddock politely declined ' the corns,' saying, “Thank you, Mr. Clarke, I shall do very well without them. Give 'em to Mr. Atterbury. I see he's hungry. Hunger sharpens some men's temper.”

So John Braddock voluntarily went without a share of ' the pretty sample.'

Then the spirits of the jury began to flag : and for an hour they did little but scowl at each other, and mutter about the suppers, and beds, and families from which they were kept.

At eleven P.M. the spirits of the jury revived again, and they recounted their past experiences of departed juries. They went into the history of juries. Mr. Horseman, with dissonant utterances, told how in times past a jury who could not agree to a verdict, had, on the closing of the Sedgehassock assizes, been put into two tumbrils,—six men in each tumbril,—and been conveyed in ignominy through the streets of Sedgehassock, and right through the 'light lands' to the border of the two counties, in the rear of the judge's coach. Mr. Horseman told how those jurymen were fearfully jolted and tumbled in those springless tumbrils, as they were carted, with

all the speed which cart-horses could achieve, close behind the judicial equipage. Mr. Horseman told how it was impossible for any juryman to escape, because a strong body of mounted javelin-men guarded the said jury. Lastly, Mr. Horseman recounted how, on coming to a broad, deep stream which divided the two counties, his lordship, putting his head out of his coach-window, said 'Gentlemen of the jury, can you give me a verdict?'—how the jurymen couldn't give a verdict, whereupon his lordship said, 'Then good-bye to you, gentlemen of the jury. I hope you can all swim;' how his lordship then drove over the bridge into the next county, and waited on the other side till he had seen the tumbrils backed to the water's edge, the pins of the tumbrils drawn, and the twelve gentlemen of the jury all shot down into the stream,—like so many sacks of potatoes.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Nathaniel Jowler, with a shudder running through his nervous organization, "I hope they all got out alive."

Whereto the discontented juryman responded with ferocious exultation, "There was not a man of 'em escaped alive. They were all drowned,—every jack man of 'em. They were all husbands, and fathers with large families. Twelve widows and twelve large families all left utterly destitute. You may take my word for it. If you don't like to take my word, why, you needn't."

Having taken copious notes of this valuable and altogether reliable piece of history, Mr. Hedgestake, relaxing from stern official dignity, told how he had read of a case where a jury found a verdict by tossing up ;*

* The *Gentleman's Magazine* (A.D. 1785. v. 55. p. 916) mentions this case.

"A motion," says the '*Gentleman's Magazine*,' was made in the

and how, though the verdict was appealed against, it was allowed to stand. "But, unfortunately," observed Mr Hedgestake, when he had made a note of his own story, "the verdict was in a civil cause. So it is no precedent for us, as we are bound to decide on a criminal one."

Mr. Hedgestake's story at an end, the intelligent Mr. James Easter told a story of a verdict which had been arrived at by tossing also, but which was set aside.

Whereupon, since the jury were in a humour for stories, Mr. Matthew Allen told one about a jury on which his uncle, Sampson Allen, of Sudbury,* sat. Unable to agree to a verdict, this jury, at about midnight, broke open the door of their room, and (as the Americans term it) skedaddled. "But then," added Mr. Allen, "the trial was only some trumpery affair about an assault."

Court of K. B. to set aside a verdict, on an affidavit of two of the jurors, stating that the jury, not being able to agree on their verdict, and there being six for the plaintiff, and six for the defendant, tossed up, when the plaintiff's friends won. It was owned that the verdict coincided with the opinion of the court. Lord Mansfield asked if there was any ground of objection against the verdict: but that a verdict had been set aside on a like plea, as reported by Sir J. Hawkins. Lord Mansfield observed that the cases were different; in the former case, the affidavit was made by the bailiff who had locked the jury in, and saw them through the window; and not upon the affidavit of the jurors.

"A Law Correspondent observes, that had the affidavit of the jurors been admitted, the jury would have been liable to a trial of attainr."

* This case also is mentioned in that repertory of quaint gossip, *The Gentleman's Magazine*. "*Gent. Mag.*, Oct. 1791. At the Quarter Sessions at Sudbury, on an affair of an assault, the jury, not agreeing to a verdict, about midnight broke open the door of the room in which they were enclosed, and made off, every man to his

Still the parties remained,—five to seven.

Watches pointed to the half-hour after midnight ; but still the numbers were five to seven.

Outside the jury-room, there was rest in the castle ;—quiet in the court-house, tranquillity in the prison. Prisoners, fast asleep, were oblivious of treadmill and oakum-picking, whips and dark holes, tasks and fasting. Turnkeys on duty were dozing in secret corners ; turnkeys off night-duty were tucked up in bed. In the cell, too, where Edgar Turrett was confined—there was peaceful slumber.

Outside the castle walls and gates, the old Cathedral city was in a state of composure. Quiet, antique

own house. Next morning they assembled ; but being no longer considered as the same jury, were dismissed by the court, who determined to apply to the attorney-general for advice in a case so unprecedented. The opinion of counsel on the above transaction :—
‘There can be no doubt that the jurors were guilty of a misdemeanour, for which a superior court might attach them, as for a contempt ; though perhaps it might be questionable whether the Quarter Sessions have such authority. The jurors, having been guilty of a misdemeanour, are also punishable by indictment ; which, if any course were to be taken against them, would be more constitutional than the process by attachment. But wise policy, in my opinion, forbids any criminal animadversions at all. The institution of juries like every human institution, has its defects. That of a compulsive union of sentiment and opinion is one of them ; this effect of it seldom happens ; and happening so seldom, is better passed over than by criminal process against jurors, incurring the risk of weakening, in the public mind, the reverence so justly due to the great palladium of our freedom. Their crime, in the present instance, does not appear to have been corruption ; and, where no motive is assigned, one should suppose the best. They possibly might have been guilty of the violence to escape corruption. Undoubtedly their verdict cannot be received, neither can they be re-assembled. The trial must be *de novo*.
‘J. COX HIPPISELY.’”

streets were left to watchmen; doors had been barred, prayers said, households sent to rest. In hotels life was still astir; slippered gentlemen in coffee-rooms even yet gossiping over the trial, and wondering how the deuce it was that a verdict of 'guilty' had not been returned without deliberation. Sir Weedel Claspett and Mr. Sergeant Antrobus, with two other distinguished members of the long robe, were at their whist; and as the attorney-general dealt himself ace for turn-up card, he looked from the waxlights to his companions, and in a soft voice of exquisite drollery observed, "I wonder how my twelve friends like being locked up for the night?"

At the very moment when the attorney-general so spoke, Mr. Nathaniel Jowler was secretly engaged in settling his doubts. The stories about verdicts arrived at by tossing, had so impressed the mind of that nervous jurymen, that he deemed 'tossing up' might be of service on the present occasion. He dared not propose to the jury that they should toss up; for he knew that such a proposal for settling the fate of a fellow-creature would be indignantly scouted. But he conceived that the system would be of service to himself personally. For a moment he had scruples to adopting the method; but he artfully quieted those scruples. Having read about certain obsolete forms of legal procedure, Mr. Jowler reflected that trial by battle, and trial by ordeal, were in reality nothing but appeals to chance,—made in the belief that Providence would somehow or other influence chances, so that their result would be in favour of the right. Mr. Jowler therefore satisfied himself that he had good precedent for appealing to the turn of coin.

Hitherto, Mr. Jowler had been a 'guilty' man; but

in all honesty, he had come to have grave doubts in favour of the prisoner. Moreover, he felt secretly convinced that the 'not guilty' side would ultimately prove the winning party. The grocers had made success an affair of trade-honour; and Mr. Jowler knew well what determination had ever characterized British grocers, with their blood up. The demeanour of John Braddock had also greatly impressed the nervous juryman. A man who, after fasting for nine or ten hours, could politely decline to accept a pugillus of wheat, was clearly a man of vast powers of enduring hunger. Mr. Jowler, therefore, felt it would be best to throw his influence into the 'not guilty' party. Encouraged by the turn of coin, Mr. Jowler felt he could do so with an easy conscience.

"I will therefore," said Mr. Jowler to himself, "put my hand into my breeches pocket, and take out the first coin my fingers touch, and look at it under the edge of the table; and if I see a head lying flat upwards, under my eyes, I'll go over to the 'not guilty' side of the house."

Whereupon Mr. Jowler carried out this resolve; furtively taking a coin from his pocket, and looking at it. It was an old smooth-worn shilling; and—alas, for Mr. Jowler!—the 'head' was not upwards.

The nervous juryman did as a less nervous juryman might have done under the circumstances.

Mr. Jowler returned the old shilling to his pocket.

Then Mr. Jowler took another shilling from his pocket,—taking care, however, that it was a new shilling. How Mr. Jowler satisfied himself that his fingers had secured a new shilling, readers can guess.

Then Mr. Jowler furtively looked again;—and the image of his Sovereign's manly face met his eyes.

Whereupon Mr. Jowler rose and said, "Mr. Hedge-

stake and gentlemen,—I can't resist the voice of reason any longer. I am a 'not guilty' man."

A burst of cheers from the party for acquittal.

Parties at length stood,—six to six.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed Mr. Peter Horseman savagely, "here we are,—six on one side, and half-a-dozen on the other. Let's fight it out like men, with fists. Let's push the table up one corner of the room, and have a general 'mill,'—man to man,—old English fashion. Short rounds,—and no quarter;—and we may arrive at a decision in half-an-hour, and even yet get home to sleep.—Are you game to come up to the scratch?"

"There's no chance of getting home to-night," replied Mr. Hedgestake, who was a note-taking, not a fighting man. "His lordship has gone to bed by this time, and there's no getting our verdict to him before to-morrow morning."

"It's to-morrow morning already," viciously observed Mr. Horseman.

"Exactly so, sir," replied the chairman. "It is so. It's 1 o'clock, A.M."

No second gentleman offered to come up to the scratch with the discontented jurymen.

At this crisis, John Braddock again made his influence felt.

To the unspeakable astonishment of his eleven fellow-jurymen, John Braddock took from one of the capacious pockets of his long coat,—a breakfast knife, a loaf of bread, and a lump of butter. The loaf was not a large loaf by any means; but there was a good deal of eating in it. An oblong, delicately shaped loaf of the finest wheaten flour it was;—and it looked wondrous nice.

Brother-jurors closed round the bookseller as he cut

it into eleven slices;—only eleven slices! They eyed the bookseller wolfishly, the sight of food making them twice as hungry as they were before.

Only eleven pieces;—one of them much larger than the rest.

“Exactly,” thought Mr. Hedgestake, making another note. “Charles Atterbury isn’t going to have a slice. Serve him right. The first dissentient is going to ‘punish’ him now!”

“He’ll keep the largest piece for himself,” thought the intelligent Mr. James Easter. “Well, that’s all fair!”

“Now, gentlemen,” observed John Braddock, with demure playfulness, as he proceeded to butter the eleven pieces, “take care none of you steal my bread. For, by heaven! if you do, I’ll prosecute you! It’ll be petty larceny, at the least, to take a slice without leave. And I rather think it could be shown to be grand larceny; for bread is very scarce and dear in this room just now. Moreover, I am inclined to think a jury might hold that it was robbery from the person.”

The operations of buttering accomplished, John Braddock presented the biggest slice to Mr. Amos Clarke, the magnanimous distributor of the ‘corns,’ who liked to ‘live and let live.’ Then taking the rest in order, the bookseller presented each of them with a slice, not excepting Mr. Atterbury, who seized his slice, and ate it like a wolf.

“But you haven’t left any for yourself, sir!” exclaimed the astonished Mr. Hedgestake.

“I thank you, sir,” returned John Braddock, “I am not at all hungry.”

“Not at all hungry?” exclaimed a chorus of voices.

“Not in the least.—When I was a youngster I lived

in the back-woods of Canada, where I had a good deal of practice in the way of keeping long fasts.

"But how long can you go without food?" asked Mr. Jowler. "What an organization you must have!"

"Well, sir," replied the bookseller quietly, "I can stand ten days' fasting without inconvenience. But a fortnight passed entirely without food would well-nigh do for me."

"I should hope so," groaned three of the 'guilty' men.

A gleam of triumph in the faces of John Braddock's party.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Amos Clarke, finishing the biggest slice, "I am a plain farmer of an old school, and hang me,—if I can eat a man's bread, and not work for him. It's clear there must be doubts, though I can't see them. If there weren't doubts,—of course, six gentlemen wouldn't be in favour of letting the prisoner go. Moreover, as I just said, I've eaten Mr. Braddock's bread, and hang me, if I don't work for him! So I am a 'not guilty' man. Lord, gentlemen, we'd better agree to let the fellow off! If we are wrong, we only let off—not a regular murderer, but a gentleman who shot a scoundrel under lots of provocation. For my part, when I was in the box, I couldn't help pitying the poor young Squire. If he'd shot a gentleman in a duel, nobody would have thought the worse of him. Yet it would have been murder in the eyes of the law. Anyhow,—I am a 'not guilty' man."

Great sensation.

There was a majority for acquittal.

"The numbers are seven to five!" exclaimed Mr. Horseman triumphantly.

"No," interposed Mr. Hedgestake, "they're eight

to four. I have been in favour of 'not guilty' for the last hour."

"You said nothing about it," returned Mr. Horseman.

"No, sir,—I said nothing. But I took a note of the fact."

Whereat there was laughter from all the jurors, with the exception of Mr. Atterbury.

More discussion ensued;—in the course of which, the intelligent Mr. Easter observed "Why, gentlemen, I have been told that the law is in some countries, that when there's a majority in favour of a prisoner, he's let off. I believe it is so in Scotland. Perhaps somebody can tell me whether I am right."

But nobody volunteered to give positive information on that point of Scotch law.

Taking the point, however, as settled in Mr. Easter's favour, Mr. Gusterby said, "Then, gentlemen, we ought to let the prisoner off. My sister married a Scotchman, and I make it a rule to stick up for Scotland. So I am a 'not guilty' man."

"That's just my sentiments," added Mr. Easter, who was pleased at having exercised such manifest influence on Mr. Gusterby;—"and I am for 'not guilty' also."

This was rapid work.

Ten to two in favour of acquittal; Mr. Charles Atterbury and Mr. Samuel Clitheroe being in the minority.

Watches pointed to three o'clock, A.M.

"Have you another loaf of bread in your pocket?" inquired Mr. Amos Clarke, humourously and aloud, feeling that he could enjoy another big slice.

"Well, sir," was the answer, "I have another loaf,

but I think we'd better stick to business. Let's settle business, and then we can eat the other loaf in perfect friendship !"

"Mr. Braddock," exclaimed Mr. Atterbury, with ferocity and woeful dignity, "if you think I am going to be bribed, you've mistaken your man ! I am not surprised, sir,—to find you attempting to corrupt an independent jury. But, sir, you have mistaken your man. I'll fight to the last ! I'll fight to the last, sir !"

"I appeal to the sense of the jury to decide if I have made any attempt to corrupt," answered John Braddock, calmly. "I never dropt a hint in the first instance that I had any provisions about me. When I cut up my first loaf, I divided it without any respect to gentlemen's opinions ; and I only stated that I had a second by me, in answer to a question put without instigation from me.—But, sir,—that you may be sure I have no wish to bribe you, I shall be most happy to give you and Mr. Clitheroe your rations now, instead of when we come to terms."

Loud cries of "No, no !" "No more eating till we've done business !" "You've behaved quite honourably, Mr. Braddock !"

So Mr. Atterbury could only say, "He didn't want a wretched piece of bread and butter, which would stick in his throat if he tried to eat it," and that "he at least, having nailed his colours to the mast, would fight till he died."

But it was evident that Mr. Charles Atterbury's resolution was failing him ;—it was evident in his changing colour, and unsteady voice, and fitful graspings of his hands.

At four o'clock A.M. the two still held out against ten ; when, by a masterly stroke of diplomacy, the

intelligent Mr. James Easter vanquished the difficulty.

Taking Mr. Clitheroe aside, whilst Charles Atterbury's eye was upon him, Mr. Easter held conversation with him in whispers for five minutes; the result of which conversation was that Mr. Easter, tipping the wink, said, "You leave it all to me. You go and walk up and down behind Mr. Hedgestake's chair. I'll soon bring Mr. Atterbury round."

This whispered conversation at an end, Mr. James Easter moved away from Mr. Clitheroe, and shortly afterwards, sidling up to Mr. Atterbury, observed in low confiding tones, "Mr. Atterbury, you've fought very pluckily; but you must give in, sir;—indeed, you must, sir."

"I'll fight to the last!" returned Mr. Atterbury, doggedly.

"Ay, that's like the Atterbury blood! You know, sir, I have a great respect for all your family; and I shouldn't like to see the laugh go against you. You have done uncommon well up to this point;—but you mayn't let the laugh go against you."

"What the deuce do you mean, sir?"

"Why" (sinking to a lower whisper), "I have just been talking to our friend Clitheroe, and he's on the point of giving in. Now, if he should happen to give in,—why, you'd be alone;—and then Mr. Braddock (whom you did set down uncommonly spicy, as no other man in Sedgehassock could have done it) will be calling you Mr. One-to-Eleven; and then the laugh will be against you! For heaven's sake, sir, don't let the laugh be against you!"

Charles Atterbury turned white and trembled.

"Where is he?—where is Clitheroe? He's left his seat!" whispered Mr. Atterbury.

"Ay," returned Mr. Easter, "don't you see—he's gone to Mr. Hedgestake? It wont be two minutes before he has quietly told Mr. Hedgestake to make a note that he has changed his mind. Don't call to him. Don't seem to notice him. If you do, he'll call out 'not guilty' before you. He is awfully afraid he should be the last man. You see, Mr. One-to-Eleven is an uncommon nasty name for a man on the losing side to have sticking to him. It wont matter so much to Mr. Braddock, who has got nine already over to his side. Look! Be hanged! if Clitheroe isn't going to speak to Hedgestake!—Be before him, Mr. Atterbury! Don't have the laugh against you!—Don't be Mr. One-to-Eleven!"

"I'm for 'not guilty!'" shouted Mr. Charles Atterbury, at the top of his voice; as though his existence for another minute depended upon his making himself heard.

"What's that?" exclaimed ten voices at once.

"I'm for 'not guilty!'" again exclaimed Mr. Atterbury; and then, turning on John Braddock viciously, he added, "No man shall say I had the presumption and indecency to set my solitary opinion against the judgments of eleven men! No man shall call me—Mr. One-to-Eleven!"

"I hear you, Mr. Atterbury," answered the bookseller, smiling.

Nothing ruffled the calm, demure John Braddock.

Mr. Atterbury whispered to triumphant Mr. Easter, "The fellow has no sense of honour, or decency, or shame! I never saw such a man!"

"What's this?" inquired the dazed and astonished Mr. Clitheroe. "I am not the last man?—Am I?—He hasn't left me in the lurch?"

In answer to Mr. Clitheroe from all quarters of the room came bursts of laughter, and cries of "Yes, yes!" "You're the last man!" "He has left you in the lurch!" "You are Mr. One-to-eleven, now!"

"Why, gentlemen," explained poor Mr. Clitheroe, when there was silence, "he begged me to stick by him, and as we both came from the same grandmother,—I promised to stick by him.—And he has left me in the lurch!"

"Do I understand then, sir," inquired Mr. Hedgestake, "that you are now with the rest of us, in favour of 'not guilty?'"

"Of course, gentlemen," responded Mr. Clitheroe, his face more than ever like a big red wafer, "I am with the rest of you; with all of you;—with everybody; with anybody;—I always was."

"Then we're all of one mind;" observed Mr. Hedgestake. "We're all of one mind, and our verdict is 'Not Guilty.' I have made a note of the fact, gentlemen."

Applause; and general return of good humour.

"Now Mr. Braddock, let's have that other loaf and butter!" said Mr. Amos Clarke.

"Whereupon John Braddock produced the bread and butter; and yet further, he produced a pint bottle of brandy.

And of the second loaf and butter, as well as of the brandy, Mr. Amos Clarke had a double share.

The pint of brandy comforted the jury greatly, even elating them for the space of an hour; when the sun having risen, just as the second pair of candles flickered out, they agreed to try if they couldn't sleep away a little of the time which had to elapse before the court would open, and they could be

liberated. And by degrees slumber crept upon all Sir Weedel Claspett's friends, with the exception of John Braddock, who, vigilant to the last, watched the snoring bodies of the eleven whom he had brought round to his own way of thinking. Mr. Hedgestake, no longer taking notes, lay at full length along the table, with his head upon his note-book; on the table also were Mr. Clitheroe, Mr. Easter, and Mr. Gusterby. At each of the four corners of the room was an unconscious jurymen, reclining in the angle of the walls. Others were lying at full length on the floor. Some of the sleepers had taken off their boots, and converted them into pillows. Mr. Charles Atterbury's head rested on the candle-box. John Braddock alone sat up in his chair, vigilant to the last.

When his lordship at length appeared in court, and the gentlemen of the jury were conducted once more to their box, they were a doleful-looking party,—pale, sleepy, unkempt, unshorn; most of them bearing on their clothes the dust of the jury-room floor, or the whitening of the jury-room walls.

Sir Weedel Claspett smiled at them affectionately;—Sir Weedel Claspett could scarce refrain from laughter.

The county magnates, and the great ladies, and the dense throng were there again, deeming it certain that, whatever might have been the difficulty in the deliberations, the verdict would be 'Guilty.'

In the dock stood the prisoner, waiting for the foreman to utter the word "Guilty."

Great was the surprise when Mr. Hedgestake spoke the words "Not Guilty."

Abruptly Sir Weedel Claspett cut off his friendly relations with the twelve persons in the box, eyeing them disdainfully.

His lordship, varying his sarcasm of the preceding day, observed "Well, gentlemen, that's your verdict; and I can quite believe that—*you* couldn't see your way to a better."

There was no change of colour in Edgar Turrett's face.

He was removed from the peril of death;—not liberated from shame!

There were no cheers in court, as there would have been if public opinion had acquitted him. The silence was broken by a few hisses.

What cause had he for pleasure! What cause to say "Thank God?"

CHAPTER XX.

AN UNBIDDEN VISITOR.

Yes! He was acquitted; but not freed from shame. He was secure from having to pay the penalty of murder; but the stain of blood rested on his honour. Edgar needed not the sarcasm of the judge, nor the surprised looks of the members of the bar, nor the cold eyes of the ladies on the grand jury benches, nor the silence (broken by hisses) of the crowd, to tell him so. His own clear judgment and just appreciation of the evidence assured him that he left Sedgehassock castle—with yet another dark cloud hanging over his reputation.

Another shame to be lived down by him—who before had so much for time to slowly wear away.

The resolution (which he had cherished before his apprehension on a criminal charge) of leaving his native land was given up. The disgrace of his family—the ignominy of the father whom he had never seen, of whose place of concealment he was ignorant, of whose assumed name he had been uninformed,—he might have

aided in burying by withdrawing himself from the reach of those who, like Alec Barber, might be led to pry into the secrets of the Hollow House; but flight would not erase the damnable blot of murder which had been publicly fixed upon the name of Turrett. If he carried out his intention of removing the name from the 'light lands,' the memory would still linger there,—a memory of infamy. Castle Hollow would still remain the centre of a shameful story. Generation after generation, men would point to the Hollow House, and say, "That house was once the seat of an old and honoured family—the Turretts; but their dignity ended in disgrace; the last of the line, a worthless profligate, after squandering a great part of the estate, committed a foul murder, for which he was tried at Sedgehassock. By some accident he was acquitted, in spite of the plainest evidence of his guilt. He was set free; but his fearful crime so haunted him, and caused him to be so abhorred by rich and poor, he could not endure to dwell,—where he was a mark of scorn and odium. Selling the estate, which his ancestors had enjoyed for many generations, he went away, and was no more heard of. Thus was the once honoured name of Turrett struck off the roll of the 'light land' gentry with a crimson mark,—the blood of a murdered man." Succeeding proprietors of the Castle Hollow estate would tell this story; the proud 'quality' of the two counties would tell it; untaught peasants would tell it to their children,—over the smouldering embers of their fires.

Edgar could not depart to another land, leaving such a memory behind him.

Less shame impelled him to flight; greater shame determined him to remain in the land of his birth,—in the hope that events would one day relieve him from the

ignominy which he could never, by exertions of his own, completely live down.

When he made this resolution, three days had expired since his acquittal, and two since his return to the Hollow House; during which two days he had wandered about garden and grounds, and passed through rooms and passages,—staring at familiar objects which were surrounded with associations of tender domestic love. When his footsteps were heard on terrace or stair, the servants crept away, feeling that the sight of them would be pain to their unhappy master. They would not meet his gaze, they dared not. No one came to the House, to congratulate him on his liberation. Even his superior tenants held him to be a murderer, and would not say, “Thank God, Squire, you’re free; you’re righted.” Dr. Magnum indeed would have been by his side; but Edgar had written to the physician from Sedgehassock,—“I return to Castle Hollow to-morrow! but I do not wish to see you there. The welcome of a friend’s voice I could not endure. For a few days, leave me alone in my sorrow and darkness; when my plans for the future are arranged,—I will write to you.” Not one of the surrounding gentry deigned to leave card or message at the murderer’s door. So he was alone, at the Hollow House, in the lovely weather of early August; alone, when he paced the garden-lawn, and shrubbery-paths; alone when he visited the church, beneath the pavement of which Squire Antony had been laid to rest, whilst his grandson was away; alone when he stood gazing at Adelaide Turrett’s tablet, with the words ‘Faithful unto Death; Faithful after Death,’ engraven upon it; alone, when he sat in the old library, in Squire Antony’s vacated chair,—with his head buried in his hands, and resting on an arm of the

chair; or, at other times, with his eyes turned vacantly towards the open French window, through which the green grass, and murmuring trees, and gaudy flowers of the garden were visible.

He had enough to think about.

He could not part with the estate! He could not reside upon it,—till the darkest cloud of his dishonour had rolled from above his head! Yet, what should he do? What could he do? And in reply to these questions, some good angel put before him a plan of life!

On the third day, after his return to Castle Hollow, he had a long interview with Mr. Loggett, whom he summoned from Merton-Piggott. The lawyer expected that the chief result of his visit to the Hollow House would be the receipt of instructions to put the Castle Hollow estate up for sale; but instead of giving such directions, Edgar asked him to borrow without delay the sum of £15,000, on mortgage of certain portions of the estate. Edgar wished to have the money before the expiration of a fortnight, and bade the man of business lose no time in speaking to those of his clients who had money to lend. Of the purpose for which so large a sum was wanted nothing was said. So the attorney went back to Merton-Piggott, supposing that the cash was required for payment of pressing debts. But Edgar had another use for the money.

Mr. Loggett left the Hollow House at three o'clock, P.M.; and the rest of the afternoon Edgar spent, as he had spent the two preceding days, in solitude and meditation.

In the dusk of evening he had a visitor; the first unbidden visitor who had come to him since his return home.

Alone, he was sitting in the library. It was still only dusk ; but on the sideboard, at the side of his grandmother's portrait, stood the lamp—ready trimmed, and lit against the coming of night ; thoughtfully placed there by 'old Tom,' who wished to intrude on his master as little as possible. The glass door remained open, and the evening air came in from the quiet garden into the room where the shamed man sat—his face buried in his hands, and resting on one of the broad high arms of his grandfather's old chair.

Thus he was, when the first, only visitor who had come to him unbidden, entered the room,—delicately, fearfully, bravely, without greater noise than that of a beating heart.

"Edgar,—Edgar," quickly said this unbidden visitor, when the threshold of the glass door had been passed.

Starting in his seat, and raising his head from his hands, Edgar looked towards the speaker.

It could not be !—It was an idle, foolish fancy !—Sorrow was weakening his mind !

But it was no foolish fancy, and his sorrow was to give him strength.

For in another minute the speaker was kneeling at his feet, had clasped his hands, was wetting them with tears, was passionately asking forgiveness for having ever feared to cling to him. "Oh, Edgar, forgive me, forgive me. Do not send me away unforgiven. Ever more we must be parted. I must live my sorrow down in loneliness. Indeed, I thought I but did my duty. Indeed, I am to be pitied. Do not send me away unforgiven !"

Yes, that first unbidden visitor was Carry Bromhead.

His sorrow and shame, the world's injustice and

calumny, had thrown a bridge over the wide gulf of angry waters, across which he would not come to her, and she at one time *could* not come to him. And over that bridge, careless if curious eyes might watch her, if cruel tongues would speak evil of her conduct, she had passed ;—and again she was by the side of him whom she had loved through strange trials of misfortune and ill report.

Forgive her ?

He stood and raised her from the floor, kissing those hands which had just grasped his. He placed her in the chair which he had occupied, steeped in sorrow, as he was when she entered. He closed the door and drew the curtains, so that no eye but God's could see them, no ear but God's hear them ; and then taking a seat beside her, he listened to her words, holding the while her right hand in both of his.

She had been unwell, — indeed, had been ill. She had endeavoured to hide her anguish of mind and bodily suffering from observers ; but Dr. Magnum had discerned them, and had so urgently requested her to visit the seaside for change of air, that she had consented to pass a few weeks at Battistow ; Dr. Magnum (possibly thinking that Battistow was too near Castle Hollow for his patient's benefit) asked her to visit some other watering place ; but she was firm to her choice. She would take lodgings at Battistow, where her dear father was born, had lived the early years of his life, and was buried. She should be happy near his grave,—*this* she had both said and thought. She should be happier tarrying on the hill that looked upon the river and the ferry, and Castle Hollow on the other side of the water ;—*this* she had thought, but had not said. So she and her mother were

lodging at Battistow, and had been there for two days past. Last evening, and on the evening before, she had walked on the sand of the sea-shore, and sat on the shingle patches,—listening to the ocean's murmur, thinking of Castle Hollow and of him she loved. Again (for a third evening) she walked by herself upon the beach, not intending, when she came out, to wander from the white margin of the drowsy waves. The longer she listened to the waters, the more she yearned to be at Castle Hollow, to see it once again, to pass through the village, to look at the church, to gaze at the sad, sad house—which was once a happy home. So she walked away from the shore to the ferry; the ferryman conveyed her over the river; and she stood in Castle Hollow. She went through the village, she passed the cottages of the peasants and sailors. She went into the churchyard, and looked into the church by the window through which she had looked when her father took her to Castle Hollow. For many minutes (it might be an hour) she sat in the quiet churchyard, thinking of the past,—trying to think calmly, but without being able to do so. Then she entered the skirting shrubbery of the garden, and went nearer and nearer to the Hollow House. She walked upon the lawn, she walked upon the terrace, she walked beside 'Aunt Adelaide's beds,' she turned the angle of the 'Hollow House,' she saw the open window of the library, she went nearer and saw the lamp before the portrait;—she saw him, bowed down in woe; she watched him in silence,—how long she knew not; and then she came close to him, and uttered his name. She could not have done other than she did. A great power led her on—and she was happy;—yes, very happy;—though it could not be for long!

That was all her story.

Good cause had she for happiness ! In coming close to the man she loved, she had obeyed the voice of her Maker, speaking to her through the purest and most sacred affection which of His infinite goodness He has placed in human breasts.

Then Edgar told her in tender, solemn tones that story of his life of which she was ignorant ; that fearful secret which he had resolved never to reveal ; but which she, by her great love and devotion, had won the right to know. He told her that the saint in heaven, whom she called 'Aunt Adelaide,' was his mother ; and that his father was a felon, hiding somewhere in the land from those who executed the laws by which he was doomed to ignominious death. He told her how these facts, long concealed from him by the 'old Squire' and Adelaide Turrett, had been communicated to him ; and how, to save his aged grandsire and mother from the anguish of hearing that they had not lived their secret down, he had made terms with the dead sinful man, and given him that post-obit bond which had been produced at the trial. He confessed how, because he shrunk from the thought of making her a partner of his shame, and a mother of children who would be participators in it also, he had suffered the line between them to become a gap, and the gap to broaden into a gulf ; and how at the very moment when she had deemed him further away from her than ever, in religious opinions and aspirations, he was very near to her,—and was still near to her. He also laid before her his old discarded plan of flying to a foreign land, and there living his shame down in secret sorrow to the grave, where no children of his would have to follow him. He made no fresh avowal that he was innocent as an unborn babe of the

crime laid to his charge ; for such avowal he knew to be needless, as she was by his side.

Yes, while the world stood aloof, she was by his side !

Then he laid before her another life-plan, which had replaced the discarded scheme. He would wait patiently, praying God one day to prove him innocent of bloodshed in the sight of all men. He would wait in his native land ; but not at Castle Hollow, where his name would be a name of shame and guilt, and where those who ought to look up to him with affection and reverence would turn away from him as one worthy of hate. He meant to take another name, and go into the heart of the wild, weary tracts of the distant fen-land, where labour, such as he would give, and knowledge, such as he possessed, could be turned to the service of his fellow men ;—and in being so turned to service, would be a fit offering for a penitent man to render to the great God, whom, in the days of his happy, heedless youth, he had neglected. *Laborare est orare !* By labour and self-denial, he would, with meekness and earnestness, strive to make himself acceptable to God, who alone could make him again beloved by man !

While he thus spoke fully of the past and future, Carry sat in silence, keeping her hand in his ; but when he ceased, she rose, and entreated him to let her be the sharer of his toil and danger.—It was dangerous to live in the wild fen-land then.

“ Let me go with you,” pleaded Carry, “ oh, let me go with you. Your shame is my shame, your sorrow my sorrow, your life my life ;—let us live them down together !”

But Edgar, kissing the pure hand which he still retained, answered firmly—firmly, though tears were falling from his eyes, “ Not yet, not yet, Carry ; let

God hear my prayer, and remove from me the shame which belongs to my own proper self, and then (if that blessed time should ever come) your life and mine shall run together in the tranquil course of sweet domestic love ;—and your complete and generous devotion to me shall be published to the world. When I am acknowledged innocent of bloodshed, you, my child, my love, my hope,—shall openly share with me that other shame ; but till then, my darling, we must live down shame, sorrow, life—apart from each other, and in secret.”

More they spoke, more which no pen can fitly tell.

Then Edgar led Carry forth into the quiet garden, and she leaned trustfully on his arm, whilst they walked to the ferry in the peaceful moonlight,—where (without rousing the ferryman) Edgar put her in the boat, and himself rowed her to the other side. And having landed her, and moored the boat, he walked with her to the rude fishing town, bidding her farewell when they drew nigh to the house in which she lodged ; but his eyes did not lose sight of her till she had entered the house ; and, after that, he remained on the beach, watching the light of her bed-room window.

“ She is praying !” he thought.

Yes, she was praying ; but she was offering thanksgivings also. “ Father in heaven, all-powerful ! all-merciful !” she said, “ Thou hast brought him to me ! Thou hast brought him to me ! Let me ever bless Thy Name !”

When the light disappeared from her window, Edgar Turrett returned to the ferry ; and having rowed himself back to the other side, he moored the boat and retraced his steps to the Hollow House.

He, too, knelt down that night,—and offered to God thanksgivings as well as prayers.

CHAPTER XXI.

LABORARE EST ORARE.

EDGAR TURRETT left Castle Hollow.

Having raised £15,000 on the Hollow estate, he went away; but ere he turned his back on the home of his ancestors, he made suitable arrangements for the management of the property. 'Old Tom' was left custodian of the house, with a gardener and another servant under his command. The steward received directions with regard to his duties. Adelaide Turrett's pensioners and woman servant were provided for. The interior of the house was to be kept in good repair, and its appointments were to be in no way altered. The gardens and the greenhouses were to be so far preserved from neglect, that a year's increased labour would restore them to the same loveliness in which Aunt Adelaide's care had kept them for many years.

These provisions made, Edgar Turrett went away.

On the morning of his departure, as he was about to set forth to a new home and new life, the post brought

him a letter which cheered his heart. It was written in the same small, neat, accurate, well-remembered characters of that previous anonymous communication which informed him that Alec Barber had broken the conditions of the bond, and which ended with the words, "In the meantime keep a good heart in your breast. Make no answer to mere idle reports. Friends who know your trouble, and are bound to you by the strongest ties of duty, are working for you. Heaven guard and bless you!" This second note from the unknown writer ran thus: "Sir, I have written to you before, and you doubtless remember my handwriting. Be patient for awhile, and confident that time will clear your fame. A man, who is bound to you by the strongest ties of duty, will one day set you right in the eyes of the world. Be hopeful,—and may God protect you!"

With this note in his breast-pocket, Edgar mounted 'Black Baron,' and rode from Castle Hollow, on his way into the heart of the wild tracts of the fen-levels.

Those whose knowledge of the wild fen-region (where Edgar went to labour and pray) is derived from a visit to it in this year of 1863, can form no adequate conception of what it was in the year 1824, so vast is the change which labour and science have effected in that wide sweep of country between those two dates. Land which in 1824 was sold at so many shillings per acre, is now purchased at the same, or even a greater number of pounds. When Edgar Turrett (or Dr. Grainger, as he was known in the fen-land) bought a wide reach of the 'Black Swamp,' and came to live in a wretched little farm-house, nigh to the village of Blackmere, he was fifteen miles away from

the nearest habitation which could lay claim to the dignity of being a gentleman's house. The wealthier farmers who had invested capital in the fens, farmed their rectangular estates merely as 'off farms,' and living at a distance of twelve, twenty, or even thirty miles, left them in the hands of uneducated bailiffs, whom they visited rarely, and at wide intervals. Not one parish in five throughout that desolate region had a resident clergyman; and where such a dweller could be found, he was but a poor broken-down parson, worn out by chronic ague, without purse or bodily strength to do a parson's work effectually. The highest class of residents consisted of petty farmers, just removed from the labourers, and petty traders who, Heaven knows how, just contrived to stave off bankruptcy year after year. There was not a doctor within twelve miles of Blackmere who had the diploma of 'College,' or 'Hall,' or any academic body. Here and there a so-called 'doctor' could be found, living in a cabin, amongst the miserable inhabitants of a fen-village, but he was never aught better than an ignorant drug-dealer and quack, who fleeced and cheated and aided to kill the wretches who sought from him relief and strength. Where such a 'doctor' was not to be had, the sick had recourse to 'simple-vending' midwives.

The mortality of the district was fearful: it was equal to the ignorance. Of the entire population not one in a hundred could write, not one in two hundred could read. In many quarters there was not a regular divine service for those who were religiously disposed, within five miles. Most of the land was pasture, on the green of which, in the driest season of the year, were visible 'bright spots,' indicating the

presence of water beneath the surface of the flat. This ground gave pasture for young horse stock and cattle of the worst breeds. On the arable land poor crops of the poorest oats were grown year after year. The roads were such that, in the wet winter and spring months of the year, the strongest hunters of the 'corn-country' would have been mired in them. For weeks together no man could ride upon them. The horses used for agricultural purposes worked in flat clogs made of boards nailed to their hoofs, by which means they were saved from sinking over their knees in the pulpy soil. Residents in the backwoods of America may see nothing astounding in this statement, but ordinary Englishmen who are now-a-days whirled past Blackmere in railway trains, and see good roads running away from the line, right and left, will be inclined to deem it incredible; they may, however, rest assured of its truth. But at almost every crossing of these mere ditches (termed roads) there was a hut, licensed or unlicensed, where bad gin could be bought, openly or secretly. How the luckless, fever-ridden creatures got the means to purchase the poisonous liquor, was a marvel to Edgar Turrett. Rents were low, but taxes—rates for the poor, rates for repairing walls that were continually being broken through, rates for patching up fen-mills that were ever rotting away, rates for dikes, and cuttings, and sluices—were very high. Peat was almost the only fuel in the dismal swamp. Wood was scarce, where stunted willows and lean poplars were the proudest timber.

Such was the land into the heart of which Dr. Grainger went, at a time when enlightened farmers were exclaiming that reform should be encouraged in

the fen-country,—that claying should be had recourse to, that old systems of drainage and agriculture, which had been but little altered since Vermuyden's time, should be abolished, and replaced by a better system.

There was little danger that he would be recognised there, sixty miles away from Castle Hollow. The 'quality' and rich farmers of the 'light lands' never visited that flat, ugly, dismal fen-sweep, with which the terrors of ague, and vice, and poverty, and periodic 'floods' were the most cheerful associations.

With a strong body and brave heart and full purse, Dr. Grainger settled at Blackmere in the house which, in memory of him—altered, and enlarged, and almost entirely rebuilt though it is—at this present day is called 'the Doctor's House.'

Laborare est orare !

The new settler soon became known. His system of farming was novel—it put money into empty pockets, bread into empty mouths. The very poor straggled through the ditch roads to him to seek employment, and they did not seek in vain. Ere long the churlish, untaught, besotted farmers came to him for advice and help ; and having come to him once they came again ; for Dr. Grainger not only told them what to do, but lent them money wherewith to do it,—money, without which they could not have carried out his instructions. Calling to his aid common sense, and that superficial, vaguely remembered book-lore by which he had been enabled to take his M.B. degree at Cambridge, he was their physician as well as friend. His surgery contained little else but dozens of port-wine, and dozens of the new drug, quinine. Port and common sense, Cambridge learning and quinine, speedily raised the doctor's fame, and patients came to him from afar. But he

doctored none, who could pay, without fee ; a circumstance that by no means tended to lessen the popular respect for his remedies. His fees in all amounted to about a quarter of the sum which he annually expended on medicines and wine ; and those fees were paid to the funds of a provident club which he established and presided over. Whenever a new patient came to the doctor's house, and said, " Doctor, I've got the shivers on me ; will you cure me ? " Dr. Grainger's answer always was, " I'll do what I can for you ; but first of all, you must become a member of the Provident Club. Here's the list of the members. I'll put your name down, and you must 'make your mark' against it." Moreover, Dr. Grainger entertained his neighbours at his house nightly, without respect to social degree,—for even amongst the luckless dwellers in Blackmere and its vicinity, there were grades and grades ; an aristocracy 'before the world,' with yellow money hoarded in old stockings ; and a commonalty, sadly 'behind the world,' without any money beyond their narrow weekly earnings, and with scarce a stocking to put their *brown* money in. At the close of each day, every member of the Provident Club was privileged to enter the chief room of the doctor's house, where he was secure of a welcome to a basin of hot tea and a pipe of sound tobacco. The attendants at these meetings were numerous ; and as they sat over pipe and tea, the doctor read them the newspaper, or told them the news of the world that lay beyond their dull daily experiences.

For more than five years did Dr. Grainger lead this life, setting an example of constant industry to those who watched him, and placing before them, for imitation—at least for love—the character of a true Christian

gentleman.—For more than full five years ; indeed, until the January of the year 1830.

Throughout those five years, he never left the neighbourhood of Blackmere ; but his London agent, to whom his letters were forwarded from the Hollow House, kept him sufficiently informed of what went on upon his ‘light land’ estate, and supplied him with newspapers and books.

At the expiration of each year he received a note, forwarded by this same London agent, from his mysterious correspondent, bidding him wait patiently ; and he *did* wait patiently.

He had also another correspondent.

Every three months, Dr. Grainger received a letter which was neither directed to Edgar Turrett, Esquire, Hollow House, Castle Hollow, nor forwarded by the London agent, but was a letter directed, in Carry Bromhead’s handwriting, to Dr. Grainger, Blackmere. There is no need to tell the reader that Carry’s letters were answered by Dr. Grainger, of Blackmere.

The ‘light lands’ wondered whither the Squire of Castle Hollow had betaken himself. ‘Merton-Piggott’ wondered, and asked. Mr. Stephen Dowse shook his head, and said he had a shrewd suspicion where the villain was hiding ; but as a ‘close and sure man,’ he declined to put his shrewd suspicion in words. No, he wouldn’t even tell his shrewd suspicion to Carry, who pressed her guardian to be more communicative on so interesting a matter.

Carry alone, of all the curious dwellers in Merton-Piggott and the ‘light lands,’ had the secret ; and she kept it.

Of her life during those five years and more, the pervading spirit was the same as that which animated Edgar.

Laborare est orare! In attendance at Mr. Reeve's schools, and in visiting the sick, she was zealous as ever. In all things she was a devout, gentle, simple woman. But, as time wore on, it was noticed that she became more cheerful, more ready to laugh and create laughter. It was even reported among the 'persuasion' that she had begun to read novels again. Encouraged by this change, certain gentlemen (who shall be unnamed) took the first steps to win her special favour; but she was prepared for such attempts, and took good care that the first steps should not be followed by second ones. Merton-Piggott slowly came to the conclusion that 'John Bromhead's heiress' would live to be 'an old maid.' Hearing which prediction, Carry made herself merry with it to her guardian and mother; for there was a confidence in her breast that Merton-Piggott would, one day, have to acknowledge itself mistaken.

In the last month of 1829, Dr. Grainger (*vid* London agent), received the following brief note from his mysterious correspondent, "Be patient yet a little longer—only a little longer. Your patient waiting for the shame to pass away, will end before another year."

This was the entire note.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CONFESSION.

BRIGHT was the morning in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty, when, as Mr. William Frogmore (or, as he had come to be styled by his fellow-citizens, William Frogmore, Esquire), Mayor of the ancient city of Sedgehassock, and consequently first magistrate thereof, was sitting at breakfast with Mrs. Frogmore, and a strong party of young Frogmores, a carriage drew up in the street before his front door;—from which carriage descended Dr. Wilkins, who was as unquestionably the first physician of the city, as William Frogmore was its wealthiest and most conscientious grocer and first magistrate.

“Bless me!” observed the mayor to his lady, “what can Dr. Wilkins want with me so early? I hope nothing has gone wrong.”

As chief magistrate of the city, and also as a morbidly conscientious man, Mr. Frogmore was continually fearing that something *had* gone wrong, and hoping that something *hadn't*.

"You had better go and see what he wants, William, as you have had your third cup of tea," rejoined the practical Mrs. Frogmore, anxious herself to know what Dr. Wilkins wanted, and remembering that her mayor too often asked for a fourth cup of tea,—a request ill-becoming a morbidly conscientious man, and running directly counter to all rules of sound domestic economy.

To which suggestion the conscientious husband responded by promptly hastening to his magisterial-room, whither the physician had been conducted.

"Mr. Frogmore," said the physician hastily, going straight to his business, "I want you to come with me immediately to see my patient, poor Mr. Braddock, the bookseller, who has not long to live."

"Bless me!"

"He is lying at Barton, at the little cottage in which his old friend, Mr. Wylie, died, two years since, and where Wylie's niece, Mrs. Barber, died ten days ago."

"Dear me! poor man! But what does he want me for?" nervously interposed the magistrate. "I hope nothing has gone wrong."

"Something has so far gone wrong," returned the physician gravely, "that the poor man will probably not be alive four-and-twenty hours hence. He has evidently something weighty on his mind. Indeed he says so; and says moreover that he wishes to communicate it to you, in your character of first magistrate of this city;—he desires that I may be present as a witness, and requests you to come accompanied by your clerk, who may also act as a witness."

"Sir," replied the mayor with great agitation, "something has gone wrong."

That he might to the best of his ability and conscientiousness aid in setting right what had gone wrong, the mayor accepted a seat in Dr. Wilkins' carriage, by the side of the doctor, and having seen his clerk perched on the carriage-box, close to the coachman, was forthwith driven to the cottage, where the bookseller, whom all Sedgehassock respected, was breathing his last.

Barton was a suburb of Sedgehassock, lying within civic jurisdiction, where several terraces of villas and unpretending cottages had been built for the accommodation of retired tradesmen and affluent clerks. The distance between the mayor's house and Barton (which was a little community by itself, clean, tidy, and well-kept, and rejoicing in its own church, which had recently been built, through the influence of the zealous Bishop of Sedgehassock) did not exceed two miles. The time, therefore, occupied by the journey was not long; but it was long enough for Dr. Wilkins, during the transit, to put the mayor in possession of certain facts which it was advisable he should know.

Since Mr. Wylie's death, the manager's niece had continued till her death to reside in the cottage to which her uncle retired on relinquishing his profession; and in the church-yard of the new church at Barton, she had been buried three days before—Mr. Braddock, her servant, and her medical attendant (namely, Dr. Wilkins, the narrator) being the mourners at the funeral. Parenthetically Dr. Wilkins observed that he had 'made a point' of paying that last tribute of respect to the deceased lady, as he had always maintained a high regard—for her, for Mr. Wylie, and for Mrs. Wylie's old friend, John Braddock. It was right for the physician to state this. As the chief of the Sedge-

hassock 'faculty,' he of course did not attend just any patient's funeral. Where no especial considerations of personal respect or private interest caused him to depart from his rule, it was the physician's practice to attend only the funerals of his wealthiest patients. Dr. Wilkins drew the line at £500 per annum. When the executors or nearest relations of a deceased £500 per annum or upwards requested the physician's attendance at the funeral, Dr. Wilkins went; but when the representatives of a deceased £499 per annum or downwards sought the same compliment, Dr. Wilkins was accustomed to regret that unavoidable professional engagements rendered it impossible for him to pay the deceased the last tribute of professional affection. Silk hat-band and gloves Dr. Wilkins never wore at church, on occasion of funeral sermon, unless the deceased had left a clear £1,000 per annum in personalty, or £800 per annum in land. From this last rule no amount of respect or past fees ever caused him to deviate.

Of course Dr. Wilkins did not enter into these minute particulars whilst he spoke in soft, fluent words to the first magistrate of Sedgehassock. With regard to his attendance at the funeral, he only stated that he had the highest possible regard for the deceased Mrs. Barber, whom he had so honoured, for Mr. Wylie, and for Mr. Wylie's friend, John Braddock. That matter set in its proper light, the physician went on to say that his present patient, Mr. Braddock, had caught a severe cold at the funeral of Mrs. Barber; that after the funeral he went to bed in the cottage at Barton, where he had slept every night during the last three weeks of Mrs. Barber's protracted illness; that the cold had made alarming progress, fixing upon the lungs and bronchial tubes; that acute inflammation

had set in; and that though the sick man had as yet full possession of his faculties, it was probable he would lose them before the lapse of twelve hours.

At the conclusion of which explanations the doctor's carriage drew up before the small detached house in which John Braddock, bookseller, Buttermarket, Sedgehassock, was drawing near the close of the life in which 'people trouble themselves so;' and in another minute the mayor, and the physician, and the mayor's official clerk, were beside the bed on which Mr. Braddock lay, propped up by pillows, and tended by the elderly woman who had nursed Mrs. Barber in her last illness.

"Gentlemen," said John Braddock, faintly, turning his eyes on his three visitors, "I sincerely thank you for coming so promptly at the request of a dying man who has much to tell you, and has only a little time to live. Mr. Mayor, I sincerely thank you. Pray be seated."

Then, looking at the nurse, John Braddock inquired of her, "Is that letter posted, Mrs. Marston?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are sure—quite sure? Do not deceive me."

"I posted it myself half an hour since," answered Mrs. Marston, gently, but with a look of surprise. "You told me to post it immediately, and I obeyed your orders, sir. Of course, I would not deceive you. Why should I?"

"Of course, you would not. Pardon a dying man's fancies."

"Dear sir," answered the woman, kindly, "there is nothing to pardon."

"Thank you for saying so; thank you for all your kindness to me. And now leave me for a short time

with these gentlemen. I have important business with them."

When the nurse had left the room, and her retreating steps were heard at the bottom of the stairs, John Braddock, turning his eyes to Mr. Frogmore, said:—"Mr. Frogmore,—Mr. Mayor,—in the August of the year 1824, we sat on jury together, when Edgar Turrett, Esq., of the Hollow House, Castle Hollow, was tried for the murder of Alexander Barber, at Fulbourne Banks."

"We were on that jury."

"On that occasion, if you remember, I was at first the only voice to vote for a verdict of 'not guilty.' "

"You were, sir."

"I was so fortunate as to raise in your conscientious mind a doubt of Mr. Turrett's guilt; and you were the first of the eleven to come over to me?"

"I was."

"I think, sir, I was very fortunate to get you on my side. If you had not taken my view of the question, we should probably not have come to a verdict for acquittal so easily as we did."

"Possibly we should not."

"Mr. Mayor, that man was '*not guilty*.' "

"Such was our verdict."

"Mr. Mayor," said the dying man, with an effort,—"he was *innocent*. I—I—the man before you, and close to the end of a wretched life—I was the murderer—I was the murderer!"

The conscientious mayor rose from his seat, stretching out his arms in surprise and horror.

"Be calm, sir; be calm," continued John Braddock, after a pause, during which he composed himself, and gathered up all his energies for the last great effort of

his sad career. "I have called you here to make confession to you that I was the murderer who killed Alexander Barber, on Fulbourne Banks. I am weak—too weak to tell you the story with my lips. But here" (laying his hand upon a paper which was on a table by his bedside) "is my written confession. I wrote it one evening, shortly before the death of my daughter—yes, Mr. Mayor,—my daughter, Christina Barber, the wife of the murdered man. For years I have waited for her liberation from bodily suffering—intending to make confession as soon as that event should occur. Read it aloud, Mr. Mayor, to me, and Dr. Wilkins, and your clerk; they and you shall then hear me swear that it is a true confession;—and, if I have strength to guide pen, I will sign it.—Be quick, sir;—be quick!"

Thus bidden, the mayor took the paper from the table, and, having unfolded it, read aloud the following statement:—

"The Confession made by John Braddock, bookseller, Buttermarket Street, Sedgessock, who murdered Alexander Barber, of Little Deane, near Easthaven, by shooting him with a pistol, on Fulbourne Banks.

"In early life I bore the name of Herbert Andrews. Under that name I was called to the bar by the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, and married Christina Wylie, the sister of Shakespeare Wylie, then an actor on London boards, but subsequently the well-known and respected theatrical manager of the Sedgessock theatre. Having given birth to a daughter, my wife died, when we had been married less than a year;

and I—a widower, though I was still a very young man—returned to the amusements and pleasures from which my marriage had for a time withdrawn me. My associates at that period were young men far superior to me by birth, wealth, and station. With humility and deep penitence I acknowledge that in their company I led a dissolute, sinful life; but I implore all who read this confession to believe me when I say that I was not then an absolutely depraved or utterly dishonourable man.

“In the year 1793 I was tried at the Old Bailey on a charge of stealing privately from the person of Richard Cotton, Esq., a young gentleman of fortune, and one of my personal acquaintance, a purse containing notes and gold to the amount of seventy-five guineas. Those who wish to examine the particulars of that trial may find them reported with sufficient accuracy in ‘Meautyss’s Elegant Collection of Trials.’ The jury found me guilty; but here, at the close of my life, when I must speedily appear before the judgment-seat of God, I solemnly declare that I was innocent.

“On being thus found guilty of a capital offence I was sentenced to death; but, my sentence being commuted to transportation for life, I was sent to Australia—a slave for the rest of my days. I wish not to expand this confession with unnecessary details concerning my wretched and dishonoured career; I will briefly state that I contrived to escape from Australia (though in official reports Herbert Andrews is mentioned as one of several convicts who were killed in an attempt to recover their liberty);—and that, after passing some years in Spain and France, I went to Canada. Returning to England with an assumed name which I had long borne, I found my old friend and brother-in-law, the

manager of the Sedgehassock theatre, and my daughter—married to a notorious rascal, Alexander Barber,—the man whom I confess to have killed.

“Entering on the business of Mr. Carley, a deceased bookseller and printer, I settled at Sedgehassock, and then made my return known to my dear brother-in-law, who, during my absence from my native country, had educated my child with a father’s care. Alarmed though he was by my re-appearance, he received me with tears of affection, and to the close of his honest life faithfully kept my secret. The inhabitants of Sedgehassock were informed that we had been friends in early life ; but they never suspected that John Braddock, the bookseller of the Buttermarket Street, was a convicted felon, who, by returning to England, had forfeited to the law his right to existence. At first it was not my intention to make myself known to my daughter ; but circumstances, which I need not relate, induced me to reveal myself to her, and tell her much of my past history. I did this some considerable time before her husband fell by my hand.

“I need not say that I abstained from intercourse with Alexander Barber. His wife never communicated to him aught that she learnt from me about my early career. Love for a wretched father, and loathing for a cruel husband, alike restrained her from doing so. But though he did not learn from her the story of my degradation, he discovered it by other means, and endeavoured to use the knowledge as a means of extorting money from me. On the evening of June 29, 1824, he came to my shop, just as it was about to be closed for the night, and sought a private interview with me. I was not surprised at his appearance. Indeed, knowing that he had discovered my secret, I had for some time felt surprised

that he kept away from me. Moreover, I knew him by sight; and shortly before he entered my shop I had seen him drive into Sedgehassock. I was therefore in no way agitated when he stood before me, and asked for an interview.

“Telling my servants to shut up my shop, I led him into my parlour, and spoke with him. At that time I had earned the respect and goodwill of my fellow-citizens; whilst he was known on every race-course of the ‘light lands’ as a profligate blackleg. The object of his visit, of course, was to assure me that, unless I would supply him with money, by which he should be enabled to continue his vicious career, he would inform against me,—denouncing me as a felon and convict, who, without permission, had returned from a penal settlement.

“I knew the man too well to suppose for an instant that he would adhere to any peaceful compact, or that, knowing me to be in his power, he would abstain from making fresh demands on me. I knew that, if I yielded to him, he would first reduce me to beggary, and then—in vengeance because he could not wring more money from me—would denounce me publicly. The cruel wretch, who had barbarously maltreated a gentle wife, was not likely to show mercy to that wife’s father.

“I affected to be willing to make terms with him. He had to attend the Newton races on the following day, and there meet Mr. Forrester, of King’s Heath, who was pressing him for payment of a debt. Before I parted with him I gave him twenty-five sovereigns, and told him that if he met me on the first of July, at ten o’clock, A.M., at the Mettingham ‘One Bell Inn,’ I would supply him with a further sum of £125. He agreed to this proposition, and left me.

“Fortunately, I had made arrangements to start early the next morning on my periodic rounds to my country customers in ‘the trade;’ and my foreman had been prepared to find me absent from home when he opened the shop on the following day. My departure, therefore, from Sedgehassock by sun-rise on the morning of June 30 (the day of the Newton races), caused no surprise to the members of my establishment. They presumed that I had ridden out into the country to transact business with the ‘trade;’ whereas I had left my house with the resolve to commit murder.

“I appointed Mettingham as the scene of a meeting with Alexander Barber, because I knew that, to arrive at that town, he would have to take the Fulbourne Road, and pass up Benton Banks, at which place I purposed to waylay him.

“Feeling confident that the man would stay to dine at Newton after the races, and drink after his dinner, I did not approach Benton Banks till it was past ten o’clock, P.M. Backing my horse into a gully, at the foot of the hill, I remained in ambush, that I might escape the observation of passers-by. But there were no travellers on the road, which runs through a thinly inhabited sweep of country. The few persons who had journeyed from the district beyond Fulbourne Banks to Newton races, had either already returned home, or were staying the night at the race town. As I waited, a fear came upon me that my enemy might come with a companion: whereas I wished to encounter him alone. But the recollection that he would doubtless prefer to keep his visit to Mettingham a secret caused me to hope that this fear would not be fulfilled.

“At length wheels and a horse, approaching at rapid pace, were heard. Then the sound of a man singing

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To which suggestion the conscientious husband responded by promptly hastening to his magisterial-room, whither the physician had been conducted.

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"Bless me!"

"He is lying at Barton, at the little cottage in which his old friend, Mr. Wylie, died, two years since, and where Wylie's niece, Mrs. Barber, died ten days ago."

"Dear me! poor man! But what does he want me for?" nervously interposed the magistrate. "I hope nothing has gone wrong."

"Something has so far gone wrong," returned the physician gravely, "that the poor man will probably not be alive four-and-twenty hours hence. He has evidently something weighty on his mind. Indeed he says so; and says moreover that he wishes to communicate it to you, in your character of first magistrate of this city;—he desires that I may be present as a witness, and requests you to come accompanied by your clerk, who may also act as a witness."

"Sir," replied the mayor with great agitation, "something has gone wrong."

hill a chaise, which contained (as I subsequently discovered) Mr. Dowse, of Merton-Piggott, and his clerk. Misled by Barber's exclamations, Mr. Dowse believed me to be Mr. Turrett, of Castle Hollow, and called out to me, as he deposed at the coroner's inquest, and at the subsequent trial. Without stopping to correct his mistake, I rode straight on. The noise of the collision of the dead man's gig and Mr. Dowse's chaise reached me, but I did not draw rein; and instead of turning off on the left for Mettingham, I rode on to Ashton—where I slept.

“When suspicion fell on Mr. Turrett, I had not the courage to confess my crime. By such a confession, I knew I should send my old friend Wylie, and my dear daughter, sorrowing to the grave. To the last moment of his life, Mr. Wylie never knew or suspected that my hand sent Barber to another world. In like manner, my dear daughter, who, at the time when I write this is nigh death, has not suspected it, and will not suspect it.

“After a fortnight's absence from Sedgehassock, I returned to my house in the Buttermarket Street. In due course I was selected to serve on the jury at Mr. Turrett's trial; and I took my seat in the jury-box with the firm resolve that, if I could by no other means induce my fellow-jurymen to give a verdict of ‘not guilty,’ I would in the jury-room avow myself Barber's murderer.

“I write this in the parlour of my daughter's cottage in Barton, the same cottage in which my dear friend and brother-in-law, Shakespeare Wylie, breathed his last. While I am so writing, my poor child is in her bedroom upstairs, dying from cancer. She has but few days to live. As soon as I have seen her laid in Barton churchyard by the side of her uncle Wylie, it is my intention

to lay this confession before the Mayor of Sedgehassock and surrender myself into the hands of justice.

"In deep contrition I deplore my many sins, for which I dare not hope to find pardon."

When the conscientious mayor had read every word of this extraordinary confession slowly and audibly, John Braddock said in a faint voice—"Mr. Mayor,—Be good enough to write at the bottom of the last sheet of the confession—from my dictation."

There were pens and ink on the table, which stood by the bedside; and, sitting down, Mr. Frogmore, wrote the following words at the dying man's dictation:—

"On a bed of suffering, with the knowledge that I must speedily depart this life, I solemnly declare that all the statements of the foregoing confession are true, and hereto I place my signature."

Then John Braddock asked Dr. Wilkins to give him a testament that lay upon the dressing-table of the room; and having received the sacred volume, John Braddock slowly repeated the words which he had just dictated, and then kissed the book; after which solemn act, he with much difficulty wrote under the last line of the confession, "Herbert Andrews, *alias* John Braddock."

Then the conscientious Mr. Frogmore endorsed the confession with a brief statement of the circumstances under which the confession was made; to which statement Dr. Wilkins and the mayor's clerk, as well as the mayor himself, appended their signatures.

"Now,—Mr. Mayor," said John Braddock, with signs of increasing weakness, after these formalities had been attended to, "I am your prisoner. You may leave me with confidence—that—I shall not escape from you—till—till—I enter the next world,—the life after

this. Oh, may God, for Christ's sake,—pardon me!"

The mayor asked the dying man if he would like to see a clergyman.

To which suggestion John Braddock answered, "Mr. Storton was with me yesterday. He will be here again soon,—and I shall find peace—in speaking more freely to him. Thank you,—thank you,—for thinking—of it."

Then Dr. Wilkins, with a promise to the dying man to visit him again in a few hours, left the room together with the mayor and the clerk, and returned to the city.

* * * * *

Shortly before the next midnight, Dr. Wilkins called again at Mr. Frogmore's house, and was shown into a room, where the mayor was sitting alone,—expecting his visitor.

"How is he?" asked the worthy magistrate, as soon as the door was closed.

"He is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes," answered the physician slowly,—“John Braddock will never plead ‘guilty’ before an earthly tribunal.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOHN BRADDOCK'S LAST LETTER TO EDGAR TURRETT.

ON the fifth morning after the occurrences narrated in the last chapter, Dr. Grainger, of Blackmere, received a letter (directed to Edgar Turrett, Esquire) which had been sent from Sedgehassock to Castle Hollow, and from Castle Hollow to Dr. Grainger's London agent, who immediately forwarded it, together with a newspaper, to Blackmere.

The letter ran thus :—" SIR,—Before you receive this letter, the murderer of Alexander Barber will have confessed his crime, and cleared your honour from the imputations which have long rested upon it. My confession will make you acquainted with the facts which induced me to commit the crime, and to keep it a secret until the present time. For the anguish I have caused you, I earnestly entreat your pardon ; and I beg you to be merciful to the memory of Herbert Andrews. I do not venture to impose my wishes upon you, or to burden you with more secrets ; but I beg you not to be hasty in declaring to the world whatever you may

know of the career of Herbert Andrews, which is not in the confession of John Braddock. Be deliberate. Think of the pure angel in heaven whose life Herbert Andrews darkened ; and unless very grave considerations lead you to publish all the facts relating to the mystery of her son's birth, be slow to divulge them to those who have known her. Let none talk idly of her sacred name !

"I do not dare to address you by the title which nature gave me the right to apply to you. Misfortune deprives me of that right ; and the dread of paining you forbids me, at this last moment of my life, to exercise it.

"Edgar Turrett, be merciful to my memory, and pardon me !

"HERBERT ANDREWS, *alias* JOHN BRADDOCK."

This letter was written in the same small, neat, accurate hand in which were penned the communications which Edgar Turrett had received from time to time from his anonymous correspondent.

The newspaper which accompanied this letter contained John Braddock's confession.

Leaving Blackmere instantly, Dr. Grainger made speed to Sedgehassock, arriving in that city before midnight. Having descended from the coach on which he made the last part of his journey, he went forthwith to the Mayor, who rose from his bed to receive him. From Mr. Frogmore, Edgar learnt that the dead man had not been yet interred. There was a difficulty on the subject. John Braddock's fellow-townsmen wished to have him buried in Barton churchyard, by the side of his daughter ; but it was against rule to accord Christian sepulture to a murderer. Under the circumstances

of the case, guidance had been sought from the King's advisers; and that evening a message had arrived from London, empowering the local authorities to exercise their own judgment in the matter.

Application had already been made to Mr. Storton, the incumbent of Barton church, to ascertain if he would bury the deceased in his churchyard; and the clergyman had expressed his readiness to do so, if the Bishop (whom he would consult early on the following morning on the subject) did not enjoin him to take an opposite course. The mayor courteously offered to call at Edgar's hotel the next morning, and communicate to him the result of Mr. Storton's conference with his diocesan.

Acting upon this offer, Mr Frogmore called on Edgar the next day, at an early hour, and informed him that the Bishop had seen no sufficient reason wherefore he should counsel Mr. Storton not to follow his merciful inclination. His lordship, however, thought that the distressing nature of the dead man's history rendered it desirable that the obsequies should be performed as soon and as privately as possible.

The funeral therefore took place in the afternoon of that same day, Mr. Storton reading the service for the dead,—whilst Edgar Turrett, Mr. Frogmore, and Dr. Wilkins (who was present at Edgar's urgent request) stood by the grave as mourners.

The ceremony over, Edgar started for Castle Hollow.

But before he left Sedgehassock, he inspected the original papers of John Braddock's confession, and remarked the difference between their hand-writing, and that of the dead man's anonymous communications and last letter to the son,—whom he dared not address as his son.

To the last Herbert Andrews had done his utmost to keep Adelaide Turrett's secret. To her, at least, he had been faithful unto death.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SOCIETY RECANTS.

EDGAR had not returned many days to Castle Hollow before he received ample assurances that the dark cloud had passed away from his fame,—that he had lived his ill name down. Congratulations flowed in upon him from every quarter. The world can be unjust, but its injustice is almost always a consequence of misapprehension. Misled by a strange combination of circumstances, society had judged the Squire of Castle Hollow severely and unjustly; but on being enlightened as to its error, it made complete and cordial recantation. The tenants of the Castle Hollow estate, and the townsfolk of Battistow, welcomed the Squire back to the home of his forefathers with enthusiasm. The municipal authorities of Merton-Piggott presented him with an address. The nobility and gentry of the 'light lands' came to him, from near and far, with hearty congratulations; and before the close of January, the name of Edgar Antony Turrett was enrolled a Justice of the Peace, and Deputy-Lieutenant

for his county. Even Mr. Dowse professed to be overjoyed at the change which had come over the aspect of affairs, and stated at the town-club that he had always in his private breast entertained the highest possible opinion of the young Squire, though he had never made that opinion known, because he was by nature—‘a close man.’

Paying respect to the wish of John Braddock, and acting with the approval of Carry Bromhead, Edgar did not immediately reveal the strange secret of his birth to ‘the quality’ of the ‘light lands ;’ but he told them enough to account satisfactorily for the influence which Alec Barber had gained over him. He said that before his own birth, a great grief and shame had befallen his grandfather and Adelaide Turrett, which they had laboured to live down in secret ; that this old trouble, which they had never mentioned to him, had come to the knowledge of Alec Barber ; that just as Adelaide Turrett’s health failed her, and his grandfather was about to drop into into senile decay, Alec Barber had communicated the carefully guarded secret to him (Edgar Turrett) and threatened to divulge it to the world, unless his silence was bought at a high price ; that in order to secure those whom he dearly loved from anguish in their last hours, he had made terms with the rascal, giving him a large sum of money, and the bond with which the public were familiar. What the trouble was Edgar did not say ; but he and Carry Bromhead both resolved that they would take no *positive* measures to keep it hidden from the world’s eye, but that on the contrary they would, as time passed on, communicate it to their intimate friends. And ‘the quality’ were not over-curious on the subject. Most of them had a sad story of their own—connected

with their own personal histories, or the histories of their ancestors ; and therefore they were not surprised to learn that the memory of an old sorrow hovered over the roof of the Hollow House. So they asked no questions ; and when after the lapse of years they came to know more about the 'old sorrow,' like generous gentle-people they felt themselves only the more drawn by it to the Squire of Castle Hollow, his wife, and children.

Who that wife was the reader can guess.

In the bright, balmy July of 1830, a wedding procession wended its way from a certain house in Gray Street, Merton-Piggott, across Abbey Place, and under the whispering trees of the park-like grounds which surround St. Mary's church ;—in which church the Reverend Spencer Reeve forthwith united in holy wedlock Edgar Turrett and Carry Bromhead,—who had lived down their shame and sorrow, but not the joys of life.

A year later, a son and heir was born to Castle Hollow ; when Dr. Lovegrove, the aged and venerable Bishop of Beverley, made good his promise, and christened Carry Bromhead's 'boy' in the Castle Hollow church.

Competent critics, who were present at this interesting ceremony, were delighted with the manner in which the bishop performed his part, and aver that he took the baby in his episcopal arms without in any way 'rump-ling the dear little thing's robe.' Let young curates take this fact to heart !

CHAPTER XXV.

BLOSSOM AND FRUIT.

MOST of the characters who have figured in the domestic drama of 'Live it Down,' have passed from the stage.

Fanny Magnum, having found abiding peace in this world, and long lived the Lady Bountiful of Merton-Piggott, went to 'little Fan' in heaven. Martha Bromhead, in her sad, patient way, lived some years after her daughter's marriage, daily thanking God that her darling had become the wife of a true, simple-hearted Christian gentleman. The changes which came over 'light-land' society, and the difference between Merton-Piggott of the present day and the Merton-Piggott of 'Live it Down,' have already been glanced at. The members of the 'town-club' are no more. The especial friends of Mr. Stephen Dowse long since had occasion to 'prepare themselves for the worst.'

In St. Mary's Church may be seen a tablet bearing the following inscription:—

SACRIS
 TO THE MEMORY OF
 STEPHEN DOWSE,
 BANKER,
 OF
 MERTON-PIGGOTT.
 HIS CLIENTS AND HIS PERSONAL FRIENDS
 ALIKE RESPECTED HIM
 AS
 "A CLOSE AND SURE MAN."
 "OMNES PEREUNT DOWSES."

In his last illness, Mr. Dowse composed this inscription. Not being quite *sure* of his age, he made no mention of it; and not being pre-informed as to the exact day on which he should die, he was equally 'close' about the date of his demise. To Cousin Stephen's good fame, however, let it be stated that his ward's children, in consideration of the Dowse blood in their veins, came in for a liberal share of his property.

But Edgar Turrett and Carry still live, in happiness and love. They have six children, and their wedded life has not been darkened by the death of offspring. Of Edgar's three sons, the eldest is one of the Members of Parliament for Merton-Piggott, the second is a Major in the Artillery, and the youngest (who holds the family fellowship at Hooper's Hall) is well known in the scientific world. Two of Carry's daughters, Adelaide and Martha, are wives of gentlemen of

good estate in the 'light lands;' the youngest child (bearer of her mother's Christian name) still remains at home; but far-seeing observers have not up to the present date predicted that she wont find a husband.

In the 'persuasion' it is sometimes at this present day regretted that Mrs. Turrett of Castle-Hollow should so far countenance worldly amusements as to give dancing-parties at Christmas-tide, and drive to the 'meets' of the subscription hunt, of which Mr. Turrett is master. But even in the 'persuasions' it is never hinted that Mrs. Turrett is otherwise than a devout, loveable, simple-hearted Christian lady,—the friend of the poor not less than of the rich.

The Squire of Castle Hollow is now upwards of seventy years of age; but if appearances may be trusted, his friends have good reason to hope that there are still twenty good years of life before him. He is still the best rider and shot of the 'light-land quality,' as he is also the most liberal and enlightened landlord. He still retains his fen property at Blackmere, and has indeed made great additions to it. It is whispered that he has not done more good to 'the fens' than they have done to him. Moreover, men of all conditions agree that he is gentle throughout,—at least, that if his nature has a 'rough side,' it is never worn outwards.

And is Adelaide Turrett a memory of love in the Hollow House? Let those children answer, to whom the Squire of Castle Hollow, on winter evenings, when the fire burns high, and on summer evenings, when the sun sinks low, speaks of her—ever and again—with brightness in his eyes!

Thus has Turrett of Castle Hollow lived down the

winter of adversity, and surviving, put forth leaf, and blossom, and fruit.

God grant that no future Turrett of the Hollow House may have to endure a like winter !

CHAPTER XXVI.

LAST WORDS.

THE story has been told out. Its moral has been set forth on every page, and yet (the teller hopes) it has not been disagreeably thrust upon the reader. Its moral is its title—‘Live it Down.’

To those few who have never looked grief in the face, and been taught their weakness by affliction (for a few such the world contains) it says, “Be gentle to all men. Think of the hidden sorrows of the earth,—sorrows that fall alike to gentle and simple, to rich men and servants. If you have a temper, proud, or harsh, or inconsiderate, ‘live it down,’ and add not pain to those who are heavily burdened with sadness.”

To men penitent for evil wrought long since; to young men who have erred through rashness and inexperience, and are paying the penalty of blunders which the world sometimes punishes too severely; to men at the same time brave and weak, who are fighting against temptations that ever and again get the mastery over them, and have to be wrestled with anew;

to despondent men, whose spirits are weighed down by thick clouds of gloom ; to men smarting under wounds inflicted upon them by those whom they have loved and trusted, it says, "Live it down ! Live them down !—Pangs of wronged affection, temptations from within and without, gloom and remorse, blunders and sins, evils present,—ay, and even many of the worst consequences of evils committed,—are all to be lived down !"

To women sorrowful with exceeding sorrow, it says hopefully,—“Live it Down !”

To those whose moments are embittered by the shame of an ugly family story, or personal disgrace, it says, "Live it Down !—but not in secret !—Don't fear the world's eye ; throw aside morbid care for the scorn of the mean and heartless ; begin life again frankly,—and going forth to the generous and good, win their sympathy and love."

And to the very wretched of this strange world in which 'people trouble themselves so ;' to the very wretched who can never receive complete consolation on this side of the grave, it says,—“Live it Down,—patiently, meekly, devoutly—unto the life that is evermore."

THE END.

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